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## HUMAN RELATIONS

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# HUMAN RELATIONS

by

ROM LANDAU

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## INTRODUCTION

### I

#### THE WORLD AND HUMAN RELATIONS

It gave me a profound shock when a woman, whom I had always regarded as among the kindest I had ever known, remarked, 'I have made a success of everything in life excepting human relations'. Until I began to ponder over her remark it had always seemed to me that few people could have been more successful than Mrs. F. She was good-looking, had a brain above the average, and took an intelligent interest in many of the worthwhile things in life—from literature and art to gardening, and from good conversation to social service. She had an attractive home; she was both a discriminating judge of food and an excellent cook. Her son was happily married and was making a success for himself in his career. Yet it seemed quite true that everything she touched turned into a success excepting human relations.

She could not, of course, be blamed for the fact that her first husband died a few years after their marriage. She divorced her second husband after they had lived together for some six or seven years. Then she found herself constantly surrounded by people, but hardly had a real friend. The bonds she established with some of her more intimate acquaintances had a way of becoming loose before a real friendship could be struck. She was on the friendliest terms with her son, but told me one day that she knew next to nothing about his ideas and aspirations. Since she lived in the country, and he in London, she saw him only a couple of times each year.

Her servants gave her excellent service, for not only did she run her house efficiently, but had also the gift of fairness and generosity which should make for a long-enduring bond between mistress and staff. Yet they seldom stayed more than a year or two with her.

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One day in a moment of depression—she was just recovering from influenza—she told me that her profound loneliness was ‘getting her down’ and that all the privileges she was thankful to possess did not compensate her for failure to enjoy, however modest but genuine, companionship with another person.

. . . . .

The case of Mrs. F. is less exceptional than might appear at first. Could we but pry into the private lives and thoughts of our friends, relatives, colleagues, we should probably be startled to learn how many of them suffer from inability to establish a satisfying relationship with another person, and, in consequence, feel lonely. Even the married often find that they are lonely; for marriage in some cases has been reduced to a mere convention empty of significance and, in so far as true human interchange is concerned, utterly sterile.

Yet, like Mrs. F., many such people are attractive and easy to get on with; in spite of those qualities, the one thing that eludes them is the ability to establish the one relationship that gives life a central *point d'appui* and that makes most other things in life appear trite in comparison.

(While in theory it is possible to devise any kind of perfect relationship (fiction writers have been doing just that for centuries), in practice such relations hardly ever seem to exist. (It is not easy to define the term ‘perfect relations’. But it may be fairly assumed that such relations involve a high degree of integration between two personalities, an ever-lively blending of opposing and complementary characteristics, with unreserved mutual communication taken for granted.)

Since the means of communication at our disposal are either imperfect in themselves—such as language—or rendered inadequate by handicaps beyond our control—intellectual or emotional differences, a congenital reticence, the inability to give ourselves as we really are—we are for ever condemned to a certain measure of loneliness. As André Gide wisely states, ‘You talk: you argue: finally you discover that you are dominated by auditory impressions whereas you are talking to

## INTRODUCTION

someone predominantly visual. And you thought you understood each other'.<sup>1</sup>

Later in this book we shall have to consider solitude chosen deliberately by certain people. At present we are discussing the normally gregarious man. Impelled to escape from loneliness, he falls in love, marries, indulges in amorous adventures, tries to forget his aloneness in work or hobbies, joins a club, frequents the 'local'. He is always, whether consciously or not, trying to share himself, and be shared by another, in some sort of heart-warming integration. Yet in the end he is left solitary, and only occasionally and for a brief period does he bask in the illusion that he has established the perfect bond with another person. As Virginia Woolf wrote, 'We do not know our souls, let alone the souls of others. Human beings do not go hand in hand the whole stretch of the way. There is a virgin forest in each; a snowfield where even the print of birds' feet is unknown'.

Apart from the one principal bond that the average man and woman seek to forge with another person, there are the countless other relationships that might well be a source of joy, yet so often mean nothing but friction and misery.

Relations with his fellows have always provided one of the main channels through which a man could give of his best and find the best that life has to offer. Today the very bases of such relations are threatened. So many new factors militate against the founding and fostering of healthy human relations that we must be more than ever on guard against the forces of disintegration. Dehumanization of civilized existence proceeds as rapidly as does its mechanization; freedom is on the decline; education, work, even pleasure are being parcelled up and doled out in accordance with utilitarian plans designed for impersonal cogs in a machine. So human relations are one of the last refuges of those who still cherish individual aspirations and individual fulfilment. They are the one source of happiness that no impersonal State, no materialistic science, can sterilize with their controls.

<sup>1</sup> *The Journals of André Gide*, 20 January 1892, Secker & Warburg.

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To enlarge upon the value of human relations is like painting the lily. It is only at a time like the present that not only have we an excuse for discussing them in detail, but even should feel a compulsion to study them. For today, more than ever, we are in danger of forgetting that no power, money or fame, can take the place of the profound sense of contentment generated by even the simplest sympathetic intercourse between human beings. No material treasure gives us a similar sense of richness, no activity a stronger sense of being alive. It is indeed that life-element, the spontaneous increase in our awareness, which intercourse between man and man creates. Moreover, it binds us to our fellows in a living link and thus makes of us conscious members of a community, and not merely sheep in a crowd, or isolated islets drifting in a vacuum.

. . . . .

Whether man be a gregarious animal or not, to hanker after satisfactory relations with his fellow-humans is as much part of his make-up as is his desire for warmth and comfort. Naturally he hopes to make a success of them—whether in his own family fold, or among his friends or workmates. Yet how often do his good intentions lead to failure! Before he knows how it happened, a careless word on his part, or an opinion that he had absorbed in childhood and never since questioned, something in the way he behaves, or some feature of his disposition, has brought about a misunderstanding and friction. (Of course no one would maintain that one or two jags or disagreements are sufficient to wreck a friendship. In fact slight divergences of opinion and occasional bouts of friction, may be the necessary roughage in the cement. But in most *rapprochements* a delicate balance of give and take must be achieved, and in the early stages a certain degree of confidence must be established. It is only after the building of this foundation that the minor ‘brushes’ and jarring faults of behaviour can be seen in true proportion.) The path of almost every life is strewn with the wreckage of relationships that leave in us nothing but a sense of frustration, or the bitter taste born of shame.

. . . . .

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Let us briefly investigate some of the many factors that have bearing on this doleful circumstance. In many spheres we have a record of achievement entirely to our credit: we have mastered a great deal of the material world, made life more comfortable and less of a desperate struggle, and our knowledge widens from day to day. But in the realm of bettering human relations we have made no progress at all. Husband and wife, lover and lover, servants and masters, friends and colleagues—all are faced in their individual intercourse with the same difficulties that baffled their ancestors thousands of years ago. Science has been unable to invent anything against the jealousy, envy, misunderstandings and grudges that disrupt their relationships. While we have done an enormous amount to improve most aspects of our existence, we have made no advance in regard to the one that matters more than all the others put together.

However, we must not suppose that in this business of human intercourse we are entirely our own masters, free of all handicaps and impediments. From birth (and even before birth) every one of us is exposed to manifold influences. The nature of our relations with others at all stages of life is bound to be conditioned by these influences. For they have made us what we are.

Whereas some of the determining influences are in the nature of fortuitous circumstances or accidents, others, such as, i.e., our sex, environment, education, or individual character, are inescapable. It is chiefly with these more permanent influences that this book deals. It does not claim comprehensiveness—what book but an encyclopaedia could do that!—and deliberately omits certain obvious influences, such as those of drink, games, sport and gambling. They have already been dealt with *ad infinitum* by experts, amateurs, and moralists who feel strongly either for or against them. On the other hand this survey includes a number of influences the potency of which might well be questioned by some readers—the influence of dreams, of the dead, and of trifles that might easily be dismissed as insignificant.

However arbitrary the limits drawn round the scope and the contents of this book might appear, the deciding factor had to



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be the knowledge and experience of the author himself. There could be no other criterion.

Useful though an analysis of the influences that affect our conduct in relation to our fellow men may be by itself, it could be no more than the basis for a book such as this. For even the most judicious analysis cannot provide practical guidance or convincing illustration. And would there be much point in embarking on a subject of paramount practical importance, and then eschewing its most constructive aspect?

The weary reader, nurtured successively by dogmatic religion and materialistic science, by the doctrines of totalitarianism, behaviourism, existentialism, and all the other 'isms' that flourish so abundantly whenever permanent moral values are discarded, may wonder whether it is possible to suggest solutions valid for all and sundry. For the more we ponder over human relations and try to improve our own, the more we realize that what is most significant in them can hardly be put into words. There are the innumerable little surprises that crop up each day in our intercourse with others; the unexpected reactions which neither we nor the moralists eager to help us had foreseen; the individual lights and shades that each relationship throws up, and that are never the same in any other. Finally, there is the constant shifting and adjustment that a given relationship forces upon us.

Only relations that are held together by a bond of deep love (which also implies trust), or those that habit has practically emptied of all meaning, remain steady. (So do those of the saintly and the wise. But both of these classes are so rare that for the moment we can disregard them.) Most of the other relations call for some sort of tight-rope walking. Modern people live too close together—whether as husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, or fellow-employees—to luxuriate in independence of movement and freedom of attitude. Each shifting of our position automatically necessitates a change in the position of those with whom we live. Our rooms are too small, our voices too shrill, the air about us too

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heavy, to grant us the conduct of a man living on a heath with nothing but the winds and clouds above him. Each day anew we try to study, or rather to guess, the possible reactions of our wife, boss or colleague; each day anew we evolve a slightly different attitude and strategy. Yet suddenly we find ourselves confronted by a situation that we had never foreseen. Thus, finally, we come to rely upon our instinct, and hope that it will carry us further than our mental considerations and resolves. But even instinct is not an infallible guide. How often can we say with certainty whether we are driven by the voice of instinct or that of our subconscious desires?

But because it is so easy to lose our bearings in the complex maze of our relations with others, and because we all must act upon certain general principles, such as the one that it is better to love than to hate, to keep one's temper than to lose it, we all hanker after certain guiding principles that have been tried out by others and have not proved wanting; for however unpredictable our particular difficulty may be, there *are* certain common situations and lines of conduct valid for all mankind.

Are we then to base ourselves on morality as preached by the churches? Or on scientific enlightenment of the kind provided by psychology? Or perhaps on materialistic utilitarianism?

• Morality of the kind proclaimed by the orthodox churches finds itself today separated by so deep a gulf from the actual conduct of those meant to follow it—whether in personal or international relations—that it would require a large dose of other-worldliness to select it as the starting point for *practical* as opposed to theoretical guidance.

Psychology and psychoanalysis are primarily concerned with certain causes and symptoms of human behaviour, such as can be ascertained (and, possibly, cured) by methods of an essentially materialistic *weltanschauung*. Inevitably they leave out the spiritual aspect (as well as many others) of the human personality. (C. G. Jung is an exception, and not typical of psychoanalytical doctrine.)

Modern utilitarianism is a gospel of despair, born of two world wars and of a materialism that completely disregard

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what is spiritual and most noble in man. It is entirely a-moral, and convincing only to those who are so utterly a prey to hopelessness that the things of the spirit are incomprehensible to them.

An acceptable form of guidance must be evolved from personal experience of life. It will accept the findings of science, such as are offered by modern psychology, but it will temper them by reference to practical morality and deepen them by awareness of all those spiritual truths that, sooner or later, we find to be the most powerful element in human relations. The claims of utilitarianism can (and must) be accepted only in so far as they represent the existing state of affairs. To disregard them might easily lead to life in an ivory tower. But we cannot combine science, morality, spirituality and utilitarianism into a workable whole unless we first distil them in the retorts of common sense.

. . . . .

When all is said, an author who is not a quack will have to admit that no book can offer a prescription for perfect human relations. All he can do is to elucidate the true nature of such relations, expose the roots from which they derive nourishment, and, armed with such knowledge, try to evolve means for rendering them less at the mercy of accident, wish-dream, self-deception, or laziness. This in fact is what the present book is attempting to accomplish.

## II

### HUMAN RELATIONS AND THE WORLD

Five people share a compartment of the train that speeds south. One of them is obviously an Englishman, with his tweed coat, brogues, and grey flannels, the worse for wear. His hair is on the long, and his tie on the bright, side; and in his eyes there is a light as if the scene outside were reflected in them: the sun scattering silver coins over the surface of the Rhône, avenues of plane trees, unending vineyards. He has been dreaming of this journey since boyhood, and now it is reality. He is a painter,

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and has been saving up for a long time to make the pilgrimage to Arles and Aix, where his idols had found inspiration in the landscape and its eternal noon-light. He knows every picture that Cézanne and Van Gogh painted in that blessed country; but he had never imagined that reality could be so much more beautiful than their masterpieces. With every minute his excitement grows, and he is completely unconscious of his companions in the carriage. His eyes refuse to miss a single detail of the scene outside; of the shape of the hills, of the way the sun follows the curves of the Rhône, of the countless hues of green, of the pattern that the cream-coloured houses and their red-tiled roofs pick out in the landscape. That landscape is the only thing that matters. Everything else is non-existent for the young Englishman.

. . . . .

One of the two couples that share the compartment with the Englishman is young too. They are in their early twenties, and French. Both their clothes and their luggage are new; and the way they look at one another and sit—she deeply embedded in his arms—betray that they are on their honeymoon. They have left their home-town only a few hours previously, and are on the way to the Côte d'Azur, where two weeks of bliss await them. Neither of them in fact has ever been farther south than Dijon, and like the young Englishman's, this journey is the crowning event of their lives. Yet for all that, the river, the vineyards and the sun's lavish gold might as well not exist. They have eyes for none and nothing but one another, and all either can feel is the beat of the other's heart, and the warmth of their young bodies pregnant with both fulfilment and desire. So far as they are concerned, the waters of the river and the rising sap in the plants outside are wasting their effort. And so will no doubt the bougainvillaeas growing over the Riviera houses, the blue sea, and the Estoril hills with their crowns of cloud. For the two young people's consciousness reaches no farther than to one another. The surrounding world is barely a mirage—the vaguest of backgrounds to themselves.

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The other man and woman in the compartment are middle-aged. They have been married for over ten years, but this is their first real holiday, and the wife's first trip south. Her husband had been here before. As a young man he served in the army in the south, had marched along the endless roads that cut with such merciless straightness through the landscape; had bathed in the Rhône; eaten the grapes straight from the green branches; drunk the new wine pressed from them. Even before he got married he promised his future wife that the first holiday they could afford would take them south. For years they had both been looking forward to it like children.

Their hands are clasped, but their eyes are turned to the passing landscape. Oh, he recognizes the village they had just passed, with its old church on the hill, and the caves nearby. Only a few more miles, and there will be a cement-works towering huge above the Rhône, like a medieval castle. He had seen all these land-marks before. Yet they seem different, as though enriched by a new meaning. Even as a young man he had recognized how handsome this country was: but now a new beauty has been added to it. He does not realize, of course, that today he is watching not with his own eyes alone but with those of his companion as well. He tries to see everything with her eyes, and this gives a new zest to his observation, and rewards it with a meaning that would never have disclosed itself had he undertaken this journey alone.

The wife is as absorbed by what she sees as is her husband; but, unlike him, she feels not only excited but also profoundly moved. She can appreciate the beauty of the landscape, for she has a keen aesthetic sense, and travel itself heightens her awareness. But neither travel nor the scenery could of their own have rendered this landscape so significant. Into each one of the passing images her eyes incorporate the vision of her husband as a young man. How tiring must have been those endless white roads under a grilling sun! She can see the clouds of dust rising from under the feet of hundreds of marching men, and she catches the smell of hot sweat. Poor André. . . . Scene follows scene: in each one he is the centre, and the whole image is vitalized by her love for him.

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While they both follow the unfolding landscape with rapt attention, what they really see are not the trees, the river and the vines full of promise, but their love for one another. And yet the landscape is real to them, indeed more real even than it is to the young Englishman. Only its reality comes not from itself but from the emotions they pour into it. Their love is caught in it like the rays of light in a prism.

. . . . .

This not being a story-book, it is time to get off the train, leave the lucky travellers on their way south, and try to find whether meeting them might be of some assistance to the purpose we have set ourselves on *our* journey.

The five people in the compartment were travelling through identical scenery. Since they had all embarked upon their trip in search of pleasure, and were all in a state of happy excitement, even their mental states were likely to be similar. Yet how deep a gulf separated the three different worlds in which the identical landscape appeared to the three groups of travellers! While the young Englishman and Monsieur André and his wife saw two very dissimilar realities in that landscape, the honeymoon-couple were not even aware that it existed. For them it contained no lights, no colours, no memories; it was a blank.

Even before we had set out to examine the subject of human relations, we already suspected that these would be strongly influenced by the surrounding world. Evidently the opposite process is equally true, and human relations have the power to alter that world. And if they have, a fact which the five travellers demonstrated to us, then we must conclude that our surroundings, or in fact any object, are real to us only in so far as we are able to perceive them. Even then their character depends entirely upon the attribute evoked in us by our contact with other people.

The young Englishman alone saw the landscape as such (or, at least, one particular aspect of it), for no human relations pushed their way between him and the object of his observation. We might, therefore, feel tempted to conclude that our

## INTRODUCTION

identification with an object outside ourselves (and thus knowledge about it) cannot be gained unless no human relations interfere with our study of that object.

Is our conclusion really correct? Monsieur André and his wife, too, gained knowledge of the surrounding scene. Of course both nature and essence of their perception of it were different from the young painter's. Since it was illumined by their love for one another, it may easily have revealed to them certain truths about the landscape that a lifetime's study on the painter's part might never disclose to him. But who can tell? All we know for certain is that human relations, by changing the nature of our perceptions and enhancing our awareness, have the power to change the face of the world for us. It does not follow that only knowledge gained at their bidding is of value. For every object contains more truths than one. Some of those truths can be discovered only in the solitary study of the artist, philosopher or scientist. Others may be closed to all three of these, and yet unlock their secrets to eyes sensitized by some human influence. For nothing reveals to us the surrounding world more fully than the mysterious currents generated in us by something outside ourselves. And never do those currents act more potently than when that 'something' is another human being.

**PART I**

**EARLY INFLUENCES**





## CHAPTER I

# PARENTS AND CHILDREN

## I

### THE FAMILY

No man can run away completely from his mother nor make a final cut through the apron strings by which she holds him. Hereditary influences have been understood, of course, even by our remote ancestors. But it was left to the last hundred years, or less, to discover the more subtle influences, as revealed by psychology and psychoanalysis. Today any interested reader can lay his hands upon scores of books that tell him how close and binding are the links between a child and his mother, and how she goes on shaping his character throughout his life.

But if a man cannot run away altogether from his mother, neither can he from the family and the home in which he was reared. If it be true that once he has passed his twenty-first year, very little can be changed in his basic make-up and fundamental opinions, it is even more true that most of those traits and opinions had been formed before he was fourteen.

[A civilization that for thousands of years has accepted and encouraged the family unit as the foremost nucleus of social life has also made of the family the chief deposit of all the qualities that are conducive to satisfactory human relations. But because the beneficial influences of the family upon such relations are accepted as axiomatic, we must not attribute to it virtues that it does not possess, or assign to it tasks that are not within its means.

Not necessarily is a family *qua* family imbued with any special virtues, nor are the links of blood and common traditions nobler than any others. The family may be said to have an advantage over both the individual and other community units in that it encourages a rather stronger sense of loyalty than

## EARLY INFLUENCES

might be attained otherwise. It also engenders mutual trust and a certain sense of common decency.

A person not unmindful of disreputable behaviour outside the family circle will take the greatest care to behave decently within it. He feels it to be a far greater crime to let his parents down than to deal perfidiously with strangers.

On the other hand, in a bad home it is precisely the family that passes on undesirable traditions. It encourages their continuation more effectively than would a less personal type of community. In certain families the 'professions' of burglary, smuggling, receiving and so forth, pass on from generation to generation.

In the average family naturally both the good and the bad are fostered. But even in the very best ones a great deal may involuntarily be cultivated that is bad and for which the family *qua* family alone is responsible. Thus clannish loyalty can easily degenerate to an intolerance that overshadows loyalty both to the community and to individual aspirations and ideals. The sense of common decency instilled in family life might conceivably be too deliberately fostered; too strong a feeling that 'we are not as other families' might lead to pharisaic self-righteousness.

. . . . .

Though we may not be willing to admit the drawbacks of family influence in so many words, we often do it by implication. For if that influence were the very best for our children, we should hardly be sending them away to boarding-schools. We do so not so much for the sake of their acquiring professional knowledge as in the interests of character. Evidently the influence of complete strangers is considered more desirable than that of the family. During the most formative years the family is permitted to exercise its influence only during the limited holiday periods. Yet the decision of the family to send the young to a boarding school is fundamentally right. For the inevitably parochial influences of a small group, such as the family, can be more harmful than that of a community with wider and more varied views and ways. At home it would be much less easy for the young to develop the virtues of friendship,

## PARENTS AND CHILDREN

self-denial or the community spirit, or to find the same opportunities for measuring up to circumstances and overcoming difficulties.

. . . . .

However important the influence of the school and, later on, of the university, or of the place of employment, in the long run it is the family whose influence proves strongest. It could hardly be otherwise. The first truths of life—of bodily movement and biological processes, of work and play, of how to walk, to eat, to speak—are all acquired before a child is sent to school. And since the child has been taught at home what is considered right and what wrong, these truths will guide him throughout life. Either he will in later life accept them unquestioningly or will repudiate them, knowing full well that in so doing he is for good or ill violating the family code. In either case his sense of values will have been determined by family influences.

. . . . .

So far civilization has been unable to evolve a system superior to the one represented by the family. It is right therefore that everything should be done to improve its facilities for bringing up the young. Yet is it not true that countless children are miserable within their family and develop a grudge against it from which they cannot free themselves, and that this misfortune has a profound effect upon their relations with their fellow-men?

Even without particularizing about families flagrantly responsible for the unhappiness of their young, we know that there is much scope for improvement in the family as such. This applies especially to urban families where most of the links with the fundamental laws of nature have been severed, without having been replaced by anything half as valid. The shepherd in the Balkans, the Arab in the desert, the peasant in the Pyrenees, leads more or less the same life that his ancestors led hundreds of years ago. In bringing up their children both he and his wife follow ancient laws that have proved their worth from generation to generation. The conditions in which the modern shopkeeper or labourer has to bring up his children

## EARLY INFLUENCES

leave little scope for the application of primitive ancient laws, even if either of them had any notion of such laws. The civilization in which they live imposes upon them its own new precepts. Yet how many of them have much knowledge even of these?

In marrying, founding a home, and rearing a family are involved the tremendous responsibilities of bringing up future citizens, yet those in charge have received next to no instructions as to what their new responsibilities imply.

Many a father imagines that educating his child means little more than instilling into it his own likes and dislikes. For many a modern mother bringing up children implies providing them with meals and clothes and a mixture of cuddling and scolding. The great problems of adjustment and constant readjustment to the world of strangers, to the mysteries of religion, sex, culture, and a hundred other spheres, are left to look after themselves.

## II

### THE MOTHER

That the mother plays the most important part in a child's life, and exercises (or at least ought to) the happiest influence upon him, is a truism on which there is no need to enlarge. But there exist less obvious aspects of the mother-child relation that are not so frequently mentioned, even though they have a profound effect upon the child's later attitude to others. No other member of the human family has been more exalted and more sentimentalized over than the mother. The idolized picture of her that emerges from conventional religious teaching, from novels, the theatre and the cinema, and from memoirs usually written long after the death of the author's mother, has, as a rule, little in common with the mothers of flesh and blood we meet throughout our lives. We often find good reasons for criticizing this or that woman who ran away with her best friend's husband, who is a gossip or inveterate mischief-maker, or whose house is a pigsty. Yet apply to any of them the magic word 'mother', and miraculously she is adorned with the halo of loving-kindness, and even saintliness. The underlying transformation

## PARENTS AND CHILDREN

is not the outcome of a deliberate process: it happens automatically, as though there were some strange power in the very word 'mother'. Under its influence few of us would ever admit to an outsider, or even to ourselves, that our own mothers could really have any faults. No matter what anybody else's mother might be, our own is the sacred repository of all the virtues. At heart we may know (or, at least, suspect) that apart from their love for ourselves, our mothers may be hot-tempered, frivolous, inefficient, in short, possessed of any of the faults common to both mothers and childless women, fathers and unmarried sons.

There is no doubt that the vocation of motherhood is in itself ennobling. And it is equally true that motherhood brings out in a woman more selfless devotion and deeper love than any other experience. But even motherhood will not deprive her entirely of whatever limitations of character or mind may be hers. It will hardly transform a stupid, intolerant, cruel or selfish woman into one who can provide for her child a living example of everything it ought to strive for in life.

If mothers were as perfect as we claim they are, why should they so often prove the main barrier to their child's happiness, notably when they become mothers-in-law? In that particular role they no longer wear the mask of saintliness that legend has placed on their faces. Instead they manifest all those aspects of a mother's influence which are most harmful: the apparently selfless love for the child is shown to be a very selfish one, for the mother considers the son or daughter as her private property, and the mate chosen by either as an intruder. Many of the beliefs, habits and traditions that she had instilled in her child may suddenly be revealed to him as inferior to those with which he is now confronted. But instead of making it easy for him to accept the new standards or, at least, to find a compromise between them and the older ones, the mother is apt to emphasize all that she considers wrong in the former.

Even when the mother does not interfere directly, her influence over the child can still undermine his matrimonial happiness. For the dogmatic truths and prejudices instilled in

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him by her in the past have a way of asserting themselves in the present. Those maternal truths may be concerned with such trifles as 'no one needs more than one bath a week', or 'coffee prevents one (or doesn't) from sleeping', or with such generalities as 'all Socialists (or Tories, or Catholics, or foreigners) are wicked'.

Unfortunately, a great deal of married life is concerned with such trifles and generalities. Because the 'truth' about them has in most cases been laid down by a not necessarily very tolerant or well-educated mother, they are accepted unthinkingly as dogmas. Any one who contradicts them (and especially one's own wife) offends not only against one's own better knowledge but, what is much more serious, against the sanctity of the Mother gospel. (Those who have ever had to act as advisers in matrimonial troubles know what an absurdly important part those mother-instilled prejudices play in married lives.)

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Even more far-reaching can be the less conscious influence exercised by what psychoanalysis terms fixation, the origins of which go back to a man's babyhood. Because, as a rule, he is entirely unconscious of it, he accepts that influence unquestioningly as something forming part of his own nature and not as reaching him from outside. Hence its great power. The more reason for the mother not to exercise deliberate influence on his opinions as well. Her warnings and bits of 'well-meant advice' cannot but undermine his matrimonial happiness.

Very often the woman of a man's choice does not come up to his idealized picture of his own mother. She speaks, moves, dresses, cooks differently. And because of those differences, because in fact of her not being the mother, the husband easily develops an almost morbid sense of criticism. He is convinced that his judgment is entirely his own, and is not aware that in reality he acts like a little boy who has had no opportunities to test his limited knowledge in the workshops of life and in the light of objective reason.

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### III

#### THE HOME

It is practically impossible to determine which of the two influences has a more lasting effect upon a child's later relations with his fellow-beings: that of the family, or that of the home. In his own imagination the two are so intimately bound up with one another as to be practically identical. Yet they represent two distinct and separate entities. A child's family background may be unsatisfactory, yet he may be devoted to his home: to the feel of an old chair, the smells of the larder, the mystery enshrined in a particular old wardrobe. Even much later in life his memories will often turn back to that unforgettable first home, and neither time nor space will have the power to rob it of its magic. If anything, they will increase it.

On the other hand, a child's family life may be a very happy one, however dismal the home. In later memories of the home even its worst features will be illumined by recollection of the happy human relations to which it formed a background. In the former case it was the house as such—rooms, pieces of furniture and so on—that left the deepest mark in the child. In the latter—it is the human element, that is, the family.

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It is no exaggeration to say that a family without a home of its own is incomplete. For it is lacking in that formative background of visual and sentimental associations that play a superlative part in shaping a child's character. To the very young, the aggregate of family members, rooms, smells, colours, forms one indivisible unit from which no single part can be removed without distorting the character of the whole.

That whole, which we call the home, is the child's first symbol of stability. Even the mother, with the many changes of mood and her varied interests and occupations, does not represent an equally stable symbol. The security that comes from love, marriage, friendship, money, a good job and, finally, from faith in God, such security does not come till much later in life.



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The home with its familiar corners, and regular meals, its warmth, the clothes it provides, the wounds and scratches it occasionally inflicts but more often helps to heal, stands there immovable from the moment the child had first become aware of it. So a child with a proper home feels more certain of himself and at ease with his fellows than does the child with no home background. It is very difficult to infuse into a child self-assurance, a sense of inner stability and self-respect, without first providing it with a stable home.

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The influence of such a home by no means ends with childhood. When meeting new people, we can usually tell whether they live in a home of their own, or 'gipsy it' in lodging houses or hotels, shifting from one environment to another in which nothing evokes their attachment, interest or pride, nothing holds them. A proper home gives a man or a woman not only the self-assurance that their childhood home had given them, but also that sense of achievement without which most people find it difficult to develop inner poise. In most civilizations a man, whether peasant or tradesman, artisan or labourer, was not considered his fellows' equal unless he had a home of his own. It marked him with a stamp of respectability and trustworthiness, both of which were regarded as indispensable for satisfactory social relations.

From a spiritual point of view so high a valuation of a home might be considered wrong. For should not a man be poised, trustworthy and, last but not least, happy, irrespective of whether he has a home of his own or not? What of the wandering saints, the mendicant friars, and the dweller in a tub? Indeed the attachment to one's home (so often indistinguishable from attachment to possessions) cannot be considered desirable. Detachment from and not attachment to things (and, even, to people) should be the aim of man as an inherently spiritual being. But we cannot consider man solely from his spiritual aspect and disregard either the material side of his nature or the existing structure of society. Because of these two, material symbols determine a great deal in his life. So we have to

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accept the hold of his home over him as a fact, and its influence as among the positive ones in human relations.

Most sociologists agree that the lowering of morals and manners after the Second World War could, at least partly, be attributed to the disappearance or the breaking up of so many homes. But the weakening of the institution of the home, among the more typical symptoms of our age, is only partly due to circumstances more or less beyond our control. For we also have to consider the process of a deliberate weakening of the power of the home, as exemplified by the growing tendency of spending most of one's free time away from it. The effect is usually more marked in women than in men; perhaps because women are more bound up with the home. Its dominating influences cannot be replaced entirely by anything outside of it. It is questionable whether a girl who spends all her evenings at cinemas and dances will be a good wife and mother, a steadfast companion and a good mistress of whatever home she will call her own. (I am referring of course to 'normal' homes with a normally satisfactory family background, and not to those that make an escape legitimate.)

If modern women really used the leisure gained from a lightening of domestic duties for objectives after which they claim to be hankering—improving their minds, enjoying culture and nature, and so forth—there would be every justification for their escape from the home with its frequently uninspiring atmosphere and its routine duties. But disregarding the minority who do follow such pursuits, it is open to question whether soul, mind or body gain more from cinemas, dancing places and from loitering at Woolworth's or 'looking at the shop windows' than they would from helping to attend to the home, and doing any of the hundred and one things for which it provides the most congenial surroundings.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A report by the Industrial Health Research Board of the Medical Research Council (Stationery Office, 1947) states: "The married woman with full home duties, both housework and care of children, had experienced better health than other married women", i.e. those occupying themselves not in the home but outside of it.

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Of course leisure can be misused both at home and away from it. But then a home is not an end but only a means or, rather, the frame for certain attitudes of mind, states and activities that are more difficult to cultivate anywhere else.

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Even our brief examination of the influences of family, mother and home upon the child leads us to the conclusion that on the whole they represent something positive. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the family is the ideal social unit. Its greatest drawback is that it stands in the way of that detachment which is indispensable to true spirituality and of the all-embracing virtues which form the core not only of Christianity but of most of the great religions and systems of ethics. Is it not suggestive that the Gospels contain not a word that authorizes the family (or marriage)? That whenever Jesus Christ refers to what might be regarded as family precepts, he is negative, often to the extent of condemnation? 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' he addresses his mother. And he also says, 'I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother', and again, 'And everyone that hath forsaken houses or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold.'

One day a broader and less selfish social unit may possibly be evolved, one in which children will suffer less from the fixations, complexes and prejudices that their parents instil in them, and in which they will be imbued with a more universal, more Christian attitude to their fellow-men than the family is able to offer them.

But we are far from having reached that stage yet, and for the moment have to content ourselves with a second best—that is to say, the home and family pattern as we know it, with all its flaws and drawbacks.<sup>1</sup> But there exist many means for improving this second-best. How this can be achieved may, I hope, emerge from the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> See also chapter on 'Masculinity and Femininity', p. 79.

## CHAPTER II

# HEALTH

### I

## PSYCHOLOGICAL WELLBEING

The saying that only a man who lives in harmony with himself can live in harmony with others has a deeper truth than might appear from its slick formulation. (Why inner harmony should be of such importance for harmonious relations with others will be discussed in several instances in later chapters, especially the one on Mimicry.) We may extend the above truism by saying that one of the pre-requisites of harmonious relations with others is health.

This, of course, does not imply that sick people are excluded from happy human relationships. Fiction and life itself abound in examples of the invalid whose painfully acquired philosophy and cheerful, unsentimental acceptance of adversity, are as a light in dark corners. On the whole it would seem, however, that the compensations that sickness affords—and no one who has suffered from a grave illness over a period of time would deny that it can benefit the character—are of value to the patient himself rather than to his relations with others. The suffering, and the inner restlessness that goes with it, may stimulate the mind to the extent of creativeness. It is probably not accidental that some of the most creative minds were kept in afflicted bodies. Muhammad and St. Paul come to one's mind, and so do the deaf Beethoven and the consumptive Chopin, Rousseau, Nietzsche and Dostoevski, Van Gogh, Proust, Flaubert and D. H. Lawrence, not one of whom seemed to have been an easy companion. (Of Rousseau, André Gide says: 'Without his poor health Rousseau would merely have been a boring orator'. *Journals*, 1896.)

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While sickness makes difficult some of the efforts upon which satisfactory human relations depend, it can teach the virtues of patience, courage and submission, which a healthy person, exposed to the buffetings of the wide world, may not be in so favoured a position to acquire.

More important, however, than sheer physical health, is what might be termed psychological well-being. Yet how many of us can consider ourselves psychologically absolutely sound? The ordinary 'healthy' person is right not to bother about his physical health; he has less right, however, to take his 'psychological soundness' for granted.

Sheer animal health is no guarantee of a man's inner harmony, nor of that with his fellow men. Such harmony can be achieved only if there is a right co-ordination between body and mind. And that depends not only upon the more fundamental efforts that mobilize all our resources but also on trifling details, the neglect of which so easily produces unfavourable effects on relations with others. Though Socrates could not overcome the handicap of his unprepossessing physical appearance, he made every effort to keep himself in that state of physical wellbeing without which even the best mind becomes too sluggish to be of benefit to other minds.

Psychological wellbeing expresses itself principally in what might be called our deportment. Apart from unfavourable causes of which we are not conscious and over which we therefore cannot exercise control, there is a great deal that we *can* do to improve our deportment. Right breathing, a certain minimum of physical exercise, and well-timed relaxation, are among the aids which we can cultivate deliberately. Then there are the short-comings of either temperament or body of which we *are* conscious. To a certain extent these can be controlled, and without such a control the requisite co-ordination of body and mind is impossible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Because the person who is psychologically sound is able to achieve such a co-ordination it does not follow that people who, as a result of their athletic pursuits, have acquired well-poised bodies

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In Hatha Yoga the Hindus have devised a system for co-ordinating the aspirations of the mind with the possibilities of the body. Few people in the West have the aptitude, or find themselves in conditions, for practising Hatha Yoga. But it is not beyond any Westerner to control and adjust those minor temperamental weaknesses and mannerisms that play so large a part in human relations.

The way I speak, walk, look at another person, clear my throat, use my hands, open my newspaper—all these can be either helpful or harmful to my intercourse with others. By studying these mannerisms as objectively as possible, and training myself to eliminate what is undesirable in them, I may possibly succeed in transforming myself from an irritating to an attractive companion. If, for example, I carry the work-furrowed brow, tense expression, and all the rest of the effects of recent concentration, into company, I am not likely to prove a welcome guest. If I lose my temper because the taxi rank I'm trying to ring up won't answer, and then wax impatient because the taxi is late in coming, I shall hardly arrive at my meeting with others in the condition of mental and bodily wellbeing that is expected of me.

Of course, no one can go through life as a 'cheerful idiot' on whom all and sundry may impose with impunity. All the same, do not dismiss the quoted examples as trifling. Trifles play a very important part in human relations. Only rarely do these touch the rock bottom of fundamentals. Besides, mental and bodily self-control are not trifling matters, as anyone who tries to exercise them knows from experience.

## II

### PHYSIOLOGICAL PROCESSES

The problem of physical and mental wellbeing and of its influence upon our attitude to others is intimately related to that of our physiological processes. Yet it is considered bad

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and an impressive carriage, are necessarily psychologically sound. Such bodies and carriages may be highly misleading, and camouflage any kind of psychological disfigurement.

## EARLY INFLUENCES

manners if a man refers to these, unless he be ill. Even in literature we hardly ever find mentioned a part of life that concerns all of us, both personally and in our relations with others. There are constipation and other digestive problems that affect a person's mind and wellbeing; a woman's menstruation; a tendency towards belching, night-wetting or 'letting wind'. Yet however much any of these processes may affect us, we treat them as a skeleton in the cupboard that must never be mentioned. In consequence, they are apt to lead to ignorance and suppression, producing a sense of shame and guilt. Secretiveness, misanthropy, a grudge against the world, irritability, and, finally, a sense of inferiority—these are only some of the inevitable effects. By being kept 'secret', physiological processes easily feed the imagination, and thus, invading the psychological sphere as well, distort our sense of proportion. Our psychological reactions being so closely allied to those disorders and mishaps, the condition of these is, in turn, aggravated. Thus what might have been minor incidents in the workings of our physical body, incidents that by their inherent nature should make neither for happiness nor unhappiness—turn into psychological problems as well.

If the artificial codes of 'good behaviour' did not stop us from discussing openly our physiological processes, these could easily be confined to their physical sphere and would not impinge upon others.

Many of us are acquainted with folk in whose conversation these physical details loom disproportionately; and these people represent the too violent reaction from the state of affairs we are now discussing. After years of genteel suppression and concealment they one day 'take the plunge' and from that time on are not prepared to be in any degree reticent about 'my kidneys', 'bad legs', or any other of the thousand disorders that flesh is heir to.

Even in childhood and youth when we are healthy, physiological processes are important to us. When we grow older they can become decisive in our relations with others. There are those bouts of sleeplessness; the sluggish action of the bowels, and the sudden preoccupation with salts and laxatives; those

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unwelcome occasions when quite unexpectedly an exertion makes us break out in sweat; the almost forgotten hernia of over twenty years ago; sudden fits of giddiness or of coughing at night; and then that suffocating feeling when darkness closes upon us in the solitariness of our bedroom. All these symptoms easily make us morbidly introspective, and turn us into eccentrics or faddists. Yet we are the very last ones to realize this. Others, however, do not overlook it. For our 'kink', and the inner fear that has caused it, are unmistakably reflected in our deportment. Unfortunately, others, too, feel ashamed to speak of 'those things'. Quite unconsciously they identify themselves with the artificial standards of propriety that declare that 'those things' can be mentioned to a doctor alone. Yet though our troubles of this nature may worry us, they need not seem serious enough to make us consult a doctor. So the subject is left unmentioned, and makes us less amiable and more irritable companions.

It is quite untrue, as certain moralists would have it, that man shrinks instinctively from referring openly to the intimate details of his body's processes. This supposed 'delicacy' of feeling is an entirely new and artificial symptom in our civilization. The Greeks and Romans spoke of their physiological processes at great length and in minutest detail. In his *Claudius the God*, Robert Graves mentions the advice of the Emperor's doctor never to suppress wind when making a speech in the Senate. The effects of such suppression would only affect his health and thus the performance of his duties as a ruler. He advised Claudius to explain the situation openly to his fellow-senators and make no bones about it.

Indeed, an open admission of bodily demands might in the long run prove less painful than ill-conceived policies, part of whose errors, at least, may be due to the mental ill-feeling caused by suppression and 'good manners'.

The smaller ill should always be preferred to the greater one. Coarse talk (that is to say, if dealing frankly with natural processes from which no one is exempt implies coarseness) is better for both soul and body than coarseness of thought born of psychological frustration and discontent.



## EARLY INFLUENCES

### III

#### BODILY AWARENESS

Most of the points made so far in this chapter suggest that, to achieve the bodily wellbeing conducive to harmonious human relations, much in our bodily processes that is kept deliberately hidden (or of which we are only dimly conscious) should be brought into the full light of our consciousness. But we must go a step further still. Life in the full sense of the term means awareness. If we go through life dreaming, or as though we were automata, we do not live but merely exist. Only awareness gives content and meaning to life. What is true of what might, for want of a better term, be called mental awareness, applies also to bodily awareness.

Unlike the ancient Greeks, we take little conscious pride in our bodies and all that concerns them. Rather are we ashamed of them. Is not the body the 'abode of sin'? Just as we consider our physiological processes 'unmentionable', so are we secretive about sex and its processes. And many other bodily functions—breathing, walking, eating, and so on—are performed almost automatically and without awareness. The body of which we are never fully aware leads only a partial life, in its own way as incomplete as the life of a mind that is not awake and vital.

Recent psychoanalytical research has shown that to perform certain bodily functions consciously can have the most salutary effects even upon ailments that at one time were considered purely psychological. A man who is neither ashamed nor afraid of his sexual life derives greater benefit from it than the one who tries to delete much of it from his consciousness. A man who gives himself consciously to his enjoyment of food, making himself aware of its flavour, its hardness or softness, its heat or its coldness, masticating it deliberately and not merely automatically and hurriedly, derives greater benefit from it than the man who is only half conscious of its flavour, and reads or day-dreams while he eats it. The first 'vitalizes' it and stimulates the processes that lead to its absorption; the second one de-vitalizes

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it. Half-dreaming and automatism deprive every function of vitality.

Even the process of defaecation can add to our wellbeing (rather than do the reverse) if we try to perform it consciously (which means becoming aware of those parts of our body in which it takes place, of the specific muscular activities and their kinetic effects) and not while reading a paper, or merely thinking impatiently that we want to get it over as quickly as possible.<sup>1</sup> A walk in the country during which we are aware of the exhilarating rhythm of our movements, of the sense of wellbeing that permeates our body, and the functions of our muscles, vitalizes us more than a walk during which we are never for one moment identifying ourselves with the body.

We cannot, of course, be aware all the time of our bodily functions. And if we tried to, we should have no energy left for anything else, and should become 'body bores' with no sense of proportion. What matters, however, is that we should develop a more positive and conscious attitude to our body and its functions, and that the most vital of these, such as sexual activity, eating, defaecation and physical exercises should not be performed automatically. For a not-wholly-alive body is as little desirable in human relations as a mind that is lost in, and devitalized by, its own selfish dreams.

<sup>1</sup> Valuable information is provided by Dr. F. S. Perls, in his *Ego, Hunger and Aggression*, G. Allen & Unwin, 1947.

### CHAPTER III

## EDUCATION

#### I

Bertrand Russell—inter alia, that great propounder of common sense—once made the following statement: ‘. . . If schools throughout the world were under a single international authority, and if this authority devoted itself to clarifying the use of words calculated to promote passion, the existing hatreds between nations, creeds, and political parties would very rapidly diminish, and the preservation of peace throughout the world would become an easy matter’ (reported in *The Listener*, 3 April 1947).

No sensible person would disagree with the above statement, even though its optimism might not be shared. Unfortunately, Lord Russell limits his proposal to ‘words calculated to promote hatred between nations, creeds, and political parties’. His limitation suggests that his concern with communal matters has made him completely disregard the private ones, those that concern the individual. In this disregard Lord Russell is by no means alone, for nine out of ten living philosophers and moralists turn their full attention to communal problems at the expense of the individual ones.

Yet does not the belief that communal problems can be solved on a communal basis, as if the community were *ipso facto* an independent body, unrelated to the individuals of whom it is composed, does not such a belief imply chasing a wish dream?

True: young people ought to be taught to think internationally so as to make international, interdenominational, and inter-class hatreds impossible. But would that be enough? Are not inter-communal hatreds born because there exist individual hatreds?

The man who truly loves his neighbour, whether it be his wife, father-in-law, next-door neighbour, employer or fellow-

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worker, is less likely to hate Catholics *qua* Catholics, Russians, Socialists, or vegetarians, than the man who, already full of hatred for those in his immediate circle, is all too ready to extend this hatred over national, political, racial and religious spheres.

To teach people right thought about such impersonal entities as the Russians, or the Tories, or Democracy, without achieving this first in regard to the individual Jack or Mrs. Smith among whom they have to live, is putting the cart before the horse. Unfortunately, that is precisely what most modern moralists and sociologists are attempting to do. Is it surprising that their efforts meet with next to no success? You cannot reform humanity without first reforming man. And you cannot teach humanity right thought or right citizenship without first instilling such knowledge, with all its personal implications, in the individual.

## II

Apart from its very dangerous limitation, Bertrand Russell's statement is, of course, right. For never was clear thought more imperative than today, when slogans and propaganda are replacing the individual pursuit of truth; when people are fed on predigested arguments handed them by those in 'authority'; and when the State takes upon itself the provision of the only valid answers to every problem affecting the individual.

But quite apart from the conditions peculiar to our own times, clear thought of the kind essential if human relations are not to be handicapped by prejudice, intolerance and misunderstanding, has always been the exception rather than the rule. Even a professor of philosophy or logic, an exceptionally clear thinker on the most abstract subjects, often proves a muddled thinker where personal human relations are concerned.

The most common form such muddled thought takes can be summarily defined as self-justification. We offend others, we commit blunders, we let our emotions get the better of us and lose our temper, and we do a hundred other wrong things. As though this were not enough, we then try to find justifications for our misdeed. But since no amount of clear thought can turn

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Something bad into its opposite, we indulge in muddled thought which, at its best, might be described as sophistry. For even the most brilliant sophistry that tries to invest facts with a complexion unwarranted by truth can be the outcome of nothing but muddled thinking.

In most cases muddled thinking has little to do with attempts at sophistry, which have to be made deliberately. Its most common cause is thought's subservience to emotions. Thought should be the result of our desire for ascertaining dispassionately certain facts and, if possible, finding their logical conclusions. Unfortunately, and this is particularly true where human relations are concerned, as soon as we begin to think, emotional impulses invade our thought and muddle it. In defending ourselves (or those we love), we rarely think dispassionately. Similarly, most of our opinions are not shaped by existing facts but by our likes and dislikes, neither of which needs to be related to truth. Because a person we have a grudge against is fond of oysters or of the Italians, we automatically develop animosity against oysters or Italians. Considering ourselves rational beings, we instantly try to justify our dislike by building up an edifice of spurious 'reasons' for it. And it is out of such emotionally conceived 'reasons' that we form our opinions. How many a wife with a grudge against her husband casts her vote in a general election not according to her own political views but purely out of opposition to his views. Very frequently we act against our original intention merely in order to spite someone with whom we have just had a quarrel. We do not necessarily act thus in a fit of bad temper (when reason is entirely at the mercy of emotions), but after having conjured up a number of 'reasons' to justify our behaviour.

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Education cannot alter the fundamental impulses of human nature or greatly diminish the sway that our emotions hold over our reason. It can teach us, however, to distinguish between the two, so that we may not ascribe to the one what is due to the other.

There is nothing wrong in an emotional approach to certain aspects of life. It matters nothing to anyone but myself whether I

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prefer leg of mutton to mutton chops or Debussy to Stravinsky. But it matters a great deal to others whether I hate all Frenchmen, regard all the Tories (or Socialists) as wicked, and am indifferent to injustice or cruelty. Whereas certain of my tastes need not be related to reason and have no moral implications, others certainly have. And whenever moral issues are concerned, my attitude is apt to affect the wellbeing of others.

Thus I have no right to base myself exclusively upon my emotions, but must aim at clarity of thought. This is where education can help. It is not its business to change my preference for leg of mutton, but it certainly should help me to think sufficiently clearly to prevent my hating the French, or extending my dislike of a particular Irishman or Jew to all Irishmen and all Jews, or being callous towards people with whose views I don't happen to agree. In brief, education has the duty not only of teaching me clear thought, but also of preventing me from claiming rational foundations for my emotional notions in which reason plays no part.

### III

Rationalizing our emotional preferences and dislikes is never more dangerous than in the sphere of human relations. For one case in which rationalizing may be justified there are usually a hundred where it is the result of muddled thinking.

In most instances such rationalizing happens quite unconsciously, and thus we are not its masters. Clear thought is impossible without awareness and deliberation: this is one of the chief characteristics distinguishing it from the promptings of emotion and instinct.

Yet how often are we taught the importance of deliberation and the cultivation of awareness? As a rule, we are permitted to live (and think) as if in a perpetual dream, with only rare and brief awakenings. This is not the state most conducive to clear thinking. In the state of automatism in which we spend nine-tenths of our lives, we may experience pleasant sensations, feel the right sort of emotions, even perform valuable actions. Our entire instinctive mechanism, or the '*élan vital*', to use Henri

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Bergson's term, enables us to do that. But we cannot formulate a single clear thought in such a state of unawareness.

Thus one of the most important tasks of an educator should be to draw the pupil's attention to the difference between automatic (whether prompted by instinct, intuition, emotions, habit or mere thoughtlessness) and conscious action. Such differentiation is indispensable if the pupil is to develop a truthful and objective picture of his fellow-men and of the world about him. Without it, his thought is at the mercy of every passion that sways him, of every catch-word and slogan that is thrown at him. And his relations with other people will be corroded by perpetual misunderstandings, and dominated by prejudices and half-truths.

## IV

Though the importance of teaching the young how to think clearly cannot be overstressed, this is only part of the educationist's guiding task. For the art of clear thinking provides the pupil only with what might be called the alphabet without which there can be no speech. But it is not speech itself. We may use words rightly, yet they may easily be the wrong ones or, to put it differently, they may be expressing the wrong kind of ideas. Even the most criminal doctrines—such, for example, as the race doctrines perpetrated by Alfred Rosenberg, Hitler's 'philosopher'—can be thought out logically and cast into the right words.

What spirit should then be implanted in a pupil's thoughts and words? Before we answer this question, let us cast a quick glance at the prevailing situation. In practically every civilized country the identical moral and ethical truths are being held up before the young: honesty, charity, industry, loyalty, love of one's neighbour, and so forth. In spite of this identity of doctrine, the young may soon develop national, intellectual or any other prejudices that will separate them not only from those of other countries but even from those of other schools in their own country. Why? Because they have been taught insufficiently (if at all) the one lesson that matters most: the lesson of toleration

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and of considering the other man's point of view, however obnoxious it may be to themselves.

This ability to respect a point of view with which he cannot agree is one of man's most essential acquisitions. With increasing age most of us begin to doubt the infallibility of our own views. In youth, however, we are more impatient and conceited, and we become dogmatic and overbearing. This is precisely the time for learning tolerance.

In a way this attainment of tolerance is not quite as difficult as might appear at first. After all, dogma is applicable to a few absolute truths only, such as that night follows day, that certain causes have certain effects, that the child precedes the man, that one day we all have to die, that water is liquid, and stone hard. In comparison with these, only a small fraction of the 'truths' that we are taught at home or at school are really truths at all. Most of them are conventions, or the expressions of particular theories and doctrines. Once we have imbibed the few fundamental truths identified with the names of Euclid, Pythagoras, Aristotle, Galileo, Copernicus, Newton, and a few others, and the moral truths about honesty, charity, love, selflessness, that are common to most of the great religions, everything else is open to interpretation. All we can say in interpreting the meaning of the French or American Revolution, the drinking of vodka by the Russians, Italian manners, the superiority of British or any other goods (or poems or paintings), is that our particular view of them seems to us right for such and such reasons, but that there exist other views upon them as well. It is the duty of the educator never to represent anything that is open to different interpretations as representing as unassailable a truth as the law of gravitation. Unfortunately even the most transient, political, economic, cultural 'truths', and those glib half-truths of 'popular' science, are usually placed before the young as though they were dogma founded on absolute truth.

Unless the young are of a very sceptical or exceptionally inquisitive bent, they are bound to become intolerant of any views opposed to those with which themselves have been indoctrinated. They naturally hold more strongly to such private



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conventions and prejudices as affect them personally than to others more abstract and more general. And it is the former that affect most markedly their relations with other people. Finally, the intolerance involuntarily bred in youth becomes responsible for the violence of political or national views held later in life.

In Great Britain a somewhat phlegmatic disposition prevents exaggerated passions from asserting themselves as unequivocally as they do in so many continental countries. Thus (at any rate, in the past) national, political or social intolerance rarely was as marked as it so often is elsewhere. But morally (which in Great Britain means chiefly sexually) we are considered, and not without some justice, as the most intolerant people.

Whether or not this moral intolerance has much weakened since the upheavals brought about by the second World War, there can be no disputing the fact that political and social intolerance have grown. Their effects would have been less marked if the young had been taught the true rudiments of tolerance, and of the clear thought without which tolerance is hard to achieve.

## V

When we speak of education, we can hardly limit ourselves to education in schools. For they represent but one of the many channels through which the young absorb enlightenment. First and foremost there is the home; then the cinema with its enormous potentialities both for good and evil; the wireless; the place of work—factory, office, farm or shop; and, last but by no means least, the immediate neighbourhood—the street in a town or the village in the country. However bad the educational effects of some of these may be, neither the State nor any other authority can exercise much control in these spheres. But the combined effort of parents and school can do a great deal to counterbalance their influence.

It is not the duty of parents to teach their child chemistry or geography; nor is it the school's duty to teach it table

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manners. But there are innumerable subjects where home and school can and ought to co-operate. There are all the different matters concerning citizenship, both in its social and political implications; there are the problems of individual and public ethics; there is the complex subject of sex on which neither the home nor the school can provide the requisite enlightenment unless one works in with the other.

It so often happens that good home influences and a careful moral upbringing are nullified by dishonesty, smuttiness, and low moral standards at school. Similarly, the best school can achieve little if the atmosphere at home is one of a-morality, or conjugal strife. An unfavourable influence at home will in fact leave deeper marks upon the child than a bad school atmosphere. The authority and example of parents are more potent than those of teachers and school-mates. Yet even the poorest school makes some effort to instil the principles of sound ethics, whereas there is many a home in which such principles are all but ignored.

Here we must turn back once again to the problem of the mother's influence. Very often, as has already been suggested, she is completely lacking in the most rudimentary knowledge of what the upbringing of children means. It is a sentimental fallacy to claim that a woman who has brought a child into the world 'instinctively' knows what is best for it. For the dictates of 'instinct' are not invariably sound.

As a rule, a woman's instinct moves her toward one of the two most prevalent methods of bringing up children: if her own childhood was a happy one, she will copy exactly the methods of her mother, however ill-suited these may be to her own children; if her own childhood was unhappy, she will 'instinctively' choose methods diametrically opposed to those applied by her mother.<sup>1</sup> Both methods may be equally wrong, though occasionally, and by accident rather than design, they may in the outcome prove right.

<sup>1</sup> Whereas in women the revolt against parental influence usually expresses itself in the way they bring up their children, in a man the corresponding revolt determines decisions affecting him personally: his choice of a career, his political views, and his philosophy of life in general.

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Today few women have any excuse for relying entirely on such 'instinctive' methods. For the various sciences provide them with an amount of information far surpassing anything that they may have possessed without recourse to modern knowledge. Thus for a mother to act 'instinctively', disregarding all the findings that science holds ready for her, is turning her back on some of the most valuable aids to child-rearing that the centuries have uncovered.

However important the purely hygienic safeguards and those provided by physical and medical science may be—and their knowledge is now reaching even the most backward mothers—it is the psychological factors that play so large a part in shaping a child's character. Yet how many mothers are conscious of the innumerable psychological influences to which they themselves expose their child from the very moment of its birth? Could they answer even the most elementary questions on the early awakening of the sex instinct, the deeper meaning of a child's revelling in dirt, its sucking of a thumb, its early sadism (and masochism), its possessive love of its mother, and its jealousy of its father; on the far-reaching consequences if, even as a baby, it were permitted to witness sexual intercourse between its parents?

No one would expect a mother to be an expert in psychology and psychoanalysis. But there exists a modicum of relevant knowledge that is within her easy reach and the mastery of which will make her an immeasurably better parent. In most western towns there exist child-guidance clinics, day nurseries, ante-natal clinics, or social workers ready to act as instructors in all branches of the new lore.

To return to the lack of genuine co-operation between parents and school: though the school might do more to encourage such co-operation, and to provide better means for it, the goodwill of parents is indispensable. It is for them to take the initiative, for, after all, it is for the wellbeing and the future of *their* children that such joint consideration and action are necessary. Yet at present the average parent does little, if anything, in that cause, not necessarily out of ill-will, indifference, or laziness, but mainly because of the ignorance not only of facilities, but ignorance also of the true meaning

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of education. Problems of sex, problems of citizenship, problems of human relations: in solving these, the best efforts of the school are of little avail, and the knowledge provided by psychology and psychoanalysis is left unused so long as the cleavage between home and school persists. So before we can hope to give the young an upbringing that will really help them in their later relations with their fellow-beings, we must evolve means for providing the relevant education for the parents, and for persuading them to realize that true education is the joint concern of home and school.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

The ideal society for which man strives is one without class distinctions. Whether such an ideal can ever be achieved is of secondary importance only. For what matter more than achievement are the ideals that inspire it.

Whatever shape society may assume—and it is never the same for three consecutive generations—there will always be different professional classes: manual labourers, brain workers, and so forth, and there will always have to be people who give orders and co-ordinate the work of others—managers, foremen, overseers. Presumably there will always be governments, and it hardly seems likely that their members will not always enjoy the privileges that go with governing. (Of course the gulf between the governors and the governed need not be quite so deep as it is in Communist countries.) So we must resign ourselves to the fact that some sort of class distinction, and the privileges and disadvantages that accrue from it, are bound to continue for some time to come.

It will also be inevitable that many social groups adhere to the ways and customs that the nature of their work is apt to breed. This means that they will remain separated from one another by their respective outlooks on a great many matters, by their subjects of conversation, and by the specific jargon that each group inevitably makes its own. Taken together, those differences produce a class individuality that easily becomes quite as pronounced as that caused by birth or income. A farmer is not likely to be at his best and most expansive in the company of lawyers or schoolmasters, nor will commercial travellers or greengrocers find very much to rouse their interest when thrown together with biologists or archaeologists. Of course they can combine profitably on topics extraneous to their own main interests; but each will be conscious that his strongest allegiance is to his own fraternity.

## SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Then we shall have to acknowledge the inevitable differences caused by inherent gifts or intelligence. Both of these are bound to lead to a superiority of achievement, and thus to position or privileges. It need not follow that those differences and the ensuing privileges must always be as great as they are, for example, between Soviet intellectuals or ballerinas (a privileged aristocracy) and the mass of Russian manual workers. Even in a society where only the manual worker of outstanding gifts represented the new aristocracy there would still exist the gulf between him and those less fortunately placed, such as intellectuals, doctors and even ballerinas.

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Though distinctions caused by profession, interests and general outlook are inevitable, there is no reason why they should also lead to those social distinctions that in the past have had so tenacious a hold. Few things interfere with satisfactory human relations more than do these purely social distinctions. In the past there may have been certain justifications for their prevalence, though Heaven knows that much injustice and misery went with them. Today, however, when even the economic reasons have practically disappeared, or are acting 'in reverse', they are completely illogical. The skilled labourer, whose income is far above that of an intellectual and of most 'black-coated' workers—not to speak of the pensioned officer or of the impoverished 'genteel' classes—can no longer allege that the gulf between his and other social groups has an economic basis. Nevertheless the gulf still exists and, what is worse, is deliberately cultivated.

For this situation both the Right and the Left, or the ill-called privileged and non-privileged classes, are responsible. By their selfishness, extravagance and frivolity, certain sections of the privileged minority have made the name of the possessing classes stink in the nostrils of what used to be called 'the lower orders'. This, in varying degrees, was true of all Western countries from Tsarist Russia in the East to Great Britain in the West. The only possible exception was the U.S.A. who as a new, non-feudal, pioneering and heterogeneous nation enjoyed unique

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conditions for the establishment of a less class-divided and class-conscious society.

In those European countries, however, where a new Communist oligarchy has not as yet replaced the old order, the feeling of distrust of the 'working man' for the 'upper classes' still prevails, even though most of the economic excuses for it have been removed. Year in, year out, certain politicians go out of their way to nourish that feeling by depicting the 'upper' classes as the hereditary and parasitic enemies of 'the people'. Without much thought, the working man came to identify all non-manual workers with that class. Everyone born into the 'gentle' class, or who achieved a position of independence, came to be regarded as 'the enemy'. We find this situation in factory, farm, shop and office, and nowhere more markedly than in the master-servant relationship in homes that still can indulge in domestic help. Though in the majority of such homes servants enjoy all the freedom that they request, and probably work less hard than their masters, they still regard the latter as their 'exploiters'.

The 'social' rift within the ranks of the Left is as pronounced as it is in the Left-Right relationship, even though it is more efficiently disguised. The 'gentlemen' and intellectuals within Labour movements arouse as much suspicion in rank-and-file trade-unionists and working men in general as does a duchess in her scullery maid. This is particularly the case in countries where, as in England, the intellectual has always been slightly suspect. It is to say the least regrettable that in Great Britain, even after the Labour Party came to power in 1945, the working man's distrust of everyone representing birth, wealth, tradition, or achievement has been intensified. As a result, human relations in Great Britain after the Second World War have become embittered to an extent previously quite unknown in a country comparatively innocent of the more violent passions and frictions. Party feelings have coloured human relations to an increasingly marked degree, thus changing their very essence. This state of affairs has threatened to demoralize the working man's attitude to his own work; for when he considered that he was working for the sake of a

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capitalist, he began to take less and less pleasure in his work, and to nurse a grudge against it.<sup>1</sup>

Yet, as compared with his colleagues in the United States, France or other countries, the British workman has in the last fifty years gained enormous advantages. In spite of his (mostly justified) grumbling, an inherently revolutionary spirit and traditional antagonism to whichever Government happens to be in power, the Frenchman continues to take great pride in his work. The American workman has always regarded those more privileged, whether by birth or personal achievement, with a respect that is part envy, part admiration for another man's success. In Britain the self-made Lord Nuffield personally may have been liked by this or that workman, but was mistrusted by most of them for what he represented: power and privilege attained through personal achievement. In the U.S.A. a Rockefeller or a Henry Ford may have been hated personally by the working man; but what either of them represented was respected and admired. The British workman's attitude may possibly disclose a greater independence of mind and a less pronounced tendency to admire material success *per se*. At the same time it suggests a stronger subservience to class doctrine.

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The national unity that the Second World War fostered so strongly in all the combatant countries had also forged a social unity. Whether in the different armed forces, on the home front, or in the Resistance movements, common dangers and tasks had brought out what was best in human nature, leaving little room for artificiality or fatuousness, such as are exemplified by class feeling or inherited grudges. With the advent of peace the spirit of Dunkirk, of the rising in Northern Italy, or of the battle of Paris, was soon forgotten. An accentuated class antagonism provided one of the channels through which the sense of frustration caused by war's aftermath was expressed.

Though the whole of a nation's life is undermined by class hatreds—its economics, politics and culture—it is in the sphere

<sup>1</sup> This subject is treated at greater length in the chapter 'The Economic Incubus'.



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of human relations that the gravest effects are felt. Almost from the moment they are able to speak, the young reflect the class antagonisms of the environment into which they were born. Instead of meeting their fellows open-mindedly and accepting them on their own merits, they look out for their class labels, and judge them in accordance with these. Personal values become completely hidden behind class prejudice. In such an atmosphere satisfactory relations between members of the various classes are wellnigh impossible. Yet can any nation express what is best in it unless it works, lives and acts in some sort of unity?

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Strangely enough, it is human relations alone that can replace the existing class antagonism by unity. Neither politics, economics nor science can do it. Not even culture. Only if man meets man on the basis of their intrinsic humanity can they discover one another's true worth and evolve means for co-operation. Chewing the cud of inherited prejudices and following the 'Party line' won't be of much assistance in such efforts. There is no place in today's society for members of the 'upper' classes who think or act as though they were superior to the working man. At the same time the sins of omission and commission on the part of the upper classes belong to the past. And the working man has little justification for basing his attitude upon them. Unfortunately on both sides prejudices and political bias are still too strong to justify optimism. A great deal of education for citizenship has to be done before relations between individuals can be sufficiently satisfactory to ease relations between classes. And innumerable conventions—especially those of thought—will have to be thrown overboard.

## CHAPTER V

### SOCIAL FETISHES

#### I

#### CONVENTIONS

In earlier pages some brief references were made to conventions, whether of behaviour or thought. They will already have suggested that either type of convention exercises a profound influence upon our behaviour. So let us examine the subject of convention a little more closely.

Social conventions, which determine so much of our conduct as gregarious beings—are nothing but laws voluntarily abided by and, as a rule, only unconsciously. Unlike legal laws, they are usually unwritten, and neither the result of careful deliberation nor enforceable by legal authority. Like all man-made laws they can be either good or bad. To condemn all conventions as reactionary in the way so popular with certain radical moralists and politicians is a mark of the same kind of thoughtlessness that welcomes any innovation simply because of its novelty.

Most conventions represent a formula evolved by expediency, accident, or the particular circumstances of the moment. Silent agreement and custom have raised them to the status of unwritten laws. The majority of conventions have been generally accepted because they simplify human intercourse, or because they render the routine of living easier.

We all subscribe willingly to conventions that determine our social behaviour and our personal appearance, such as shaving for men, longer hair for women than for men, and so forth. There are, however, countless conventions that represent little beyond the prejudices of certain classes who, thanks to their position, power, or wealth, have the means of imposing them upon those to whom they may possibly represent a handicap.

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Even the very best conventions are the outcome of compromise, and so are only half-true, half-sincere. And since they have to do for everyone, they cannot completely satisfy anyone in particular. 'Manners are the hypocrisy of a nation' wrote Balzac, but what he probably meant was 'conventions' rather the 'manners'.

So long as we accept conventions for what they are, and permit them only to dictate our conduct in our more superficial relationships, they are of assistance as 'lubricants' of the possible spheres of friction. Unfortunately, conventions have a way of soon getting the better of us, and determining conduct even in our most intimate relationships. These, however, demand truth and sincerity.

There would be less danger of conventions overshadowing our most personal relations if we accepted them consciously. But this is not the case; as a rule we are quite unaware of their mastery, and the status we accord them.

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By their very nature conventions are the enemy of individuality. A society ruled by convention easily becomes colourless. Ever since the mid-nineteenth century the English—until then one of the most independent-minded people in the world and as individualistic and 'colourful' as the French then were convention-ridden—have been dominated more strongly than most foreigners by convention. English social life in its more personal aspects has therefore lost much of its sparkle. It may be better-tempered and more decorous than that of many continental countries, but it has become duller and lacking in spice. We are not altogether unconscious of this, for otherwise we should not be so eager during our holidays to escape to the more stimulating atmosphere of foreign countries. Neither in Paris nor Rome do we find conversation—whether in private house, café or street—as stuffed with clichés and pious platitudes as is the case in London.

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As has already been suggested, certain conventions are inevitable. For in a society without conventions, opportunities for

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friction would increase a thousandfold. Moreover, if in social intercourse we tried to replace every conventional action by one exclusively personal and original, we should never have a moment's mental respite.

### II

## RESPECTABILITY

There were periods in Western civilization when a man's greatest ambition was to show courage and chivalry in battle; or when the noblest attribute with which he could impress others was piety; or, again, when the mantle of scholarship or art was considered more desirable than any other.

Those days are gone, and the prize that our civilization holds before the citizen as one of the most desirable ones is respectability. The ingredients that go into the making of respectability are not easy to define, and no two people would agree about them. But when they see the final product, they recognize it instantly, no matter how spurious it may be.

One of respectability's parents—to mix the metaphor—is convention. The other parent differs from case to case. Most frequently it is social position, money, or fear of being conspicuous. But even less weighty factors have claimed their rights: the colour of one's tie, family origins, one's job. Practically anything may become a brick in the edifice of respectability.

Occasionally even a saint may reach respectability. But the coat of respectability—to vary our metaphor again—as worn by one half of the population, and desired by the other half—is not necessarily cut from the cloth of virtue. So long as you subscribe in your visible behaviour to prevalent conventions and manage to keep up the appearances commensurate with your status (or with that just above yours), nothing stands between you and respectability.

Since respectability is among the highest, if not the highest, prizes society considers worth striving for, parents and educationists concentrate on developing such faculties as ensure its

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attainment. If the development of virtue, or the possession of happiness, should favour the process, so much the better. Yet these are only a secondary consideration.

To reach the goal of respectability, the child is taught to use a certain kind of language (the one generally accepted by its particular class); to associate with the 'right' sort of playmates; to wear the right sort of clothes; to be indifferent to certain types of people, but most obliging to others, such as influential relatives or well-to-do neighbours. Above all, he must not appear different from other people, nor make himself conspicuous, even if this means thwarting his individuality and what is most creative in it.

I once employed a young gardener, intelligent and good at his work. After he had been with me for several weeks I noticed that he had given up going out in the evenings and on Sundays. Knowing that he was of a companionable disposition, one day I asked him the reason for his suddenly changed habits. After some beating about the bush, he said that the bottoms of his 'best' trousers were slightly frayed, and if people noticed they wouldn't consider him respectable. When after a few more weeks he had saved enough to buy new trousers, he resumed his old ways, and went out most evenings.

The majority of people will refuse to do a much-cherished thing merely because they cannot do it in a manner considered respectable by others. So they buy a car, join a club, or take a flat, which is above their means. Rather than not come up to a particular standard of respectability, they will land themselves in straitened circumstances, or compromise with their conscience. In consequence they soon lose a true sense of values, and sell their birth-right of happiness for the sake of external appearances.

It was in Japan that this worship of respectability and of 'what others will say' was carried to its wildest extremes. No misdeed was taken more seriously than one that brought the family name 'into disgrace'. But such disgrace need not necessarily be the outcome of a really dishonourable act. It was enough for a child of six or seven to be criticized by outsiders, for the entire family to consider itself disgraced. On the other

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hand it mattered little what acts of dishonesty or treachery were committed so long as they could be hidden behind the artificial code of manners. To 'save face' was infinitely more important than to save life, to perform a decent action, or suppress a bad one. A loving heart mattered less than a smiling face, charity less than the kow-tow.

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We need not go all the way to Japan to find how profoundly human relations are influenced by the fetish of 'what other people will say'. Even in our own Christian West the young are taught that, though in an abstract sort of way it matters what 'God thinks' of their behaviour, from a practical point of view it matters much more what 'people' will think. So when little Jane is sufficiently old to go out at night with her young man, she is careful to do nothing that may lead her into unpleasant predicaments: not so much because to act otherwise might be immoral, as because she knows all the time what 'people would say'. If nevertheless 'the worst' has happened, she will have to learn from bitter experience that the law of 'what people will say' is not strong enough to control passion. But few young Janes—or for that matter, their brothers—are wise enough to learn from experience, and so they go on respecting respectability above most other things. In time, however, they learn one lesson: to be more discreet. They will not give up the demands of their nature, or of their ambition; but they will satisfy them in a manner that will prevent the appearance of any cracks in the façade of their respectability. To do this, they will have to learn much about discretion, secretiveness, subterfuge, and even hypocrisy. For these are among the inevitable means by which conventional respectability is maintained. What an indictment of the role of sham respectability in human relations!

## EARLY INFLUENCES

### III

#### SUPERSTITIONS

Once again I must recall a gardener, though not the one who endured solitude because his trouser-bottoms were frayed! This time the gardener was a man in his forties and as level-headed as only a middle-aged English gardener can be. One day he came up to me with a smiling face. 'Look, sir, what I've found,' he said, his eyes sparkling, and handed me a four-leaved clover that he had just found while cutting the grass. 'Some superstitious folk would say this means luck,' he added in what evidently was meant to be a tone of superiority. Nevertheless he placed the clover leaf carefully inside his wallet. 'Might as well keep it as a souvenir,' he explained, as if by way of excuse.

For the next few days his face showed what could only be interpreted as pleasurable anticipation. What sort of bounty he was expecting I didn't know; but in the evenings he would spend far more time over his football pools than he had ever done before. Nothing happened for over a fortnight, and then he got news that a brother of his, a dock worker, had been killed in an accident. Soon afterwards I noticed that he studiously avoided picking up clover, as though afraid of finding another four-leaved one. Though he never mentioned the subject, I had no doubt that in his mind he now linked the 'lucky' clover leaf with the news of his brother's death notwithstanding his earlier belief that it was a lucky omen.

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As I said, my gardener was a level-headed man, typical of the average twentieth-century person whose links with the darkest past of ignorance and superstition had long since been severed; and the truths of science meant more to him than those of religion. Yes, he was typical in claiming that we are above foolish beliefs that a certain leaf will bring us luck, or a broken mirror misfortune.

Yet every one of us cherishes his pet superstition; we may be keeping them well hidden from the eyes of even our best friend,

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but we rarely can prevent them from influencing our conduct towards him.

The superstitions of actors, musicians or sportsmen who would not dream of appearing before their public on a great occasion without a certain concealed mascot, such as a piece of jewellery, an old letter or a coin—are so well known that they hardly require mention. Almost equally well known are the superstitions of seamen on the high seas, soldiers before battle, the airman before a flight. And what of the superstitions and talismans of statesmen, politicians and orators! Biographies (and autobiographies) abound in examples.

Even the ordinary citizen who never has to appear before the public, or risk his life in a hazardous venture, subscribes to his private religion of tabus and fetishes, in which certain objects or names, dates, figures or planetary constellations play their by no means negligible part. If it weren't so, we should see the disappearance of nine-tenths of the so-called astrological, occult and kindred papers and newspaper features that, in spite of modern man's scientific outlook, flourish in most countries of West and East.

Like conventions, most superstitions are taken over by children from parents or nurses. Others are accepted more or less instinctively. Hence their irrational character and their aptitude for accommodating the most contradictory beliefs. Most of the converted primitive races still hold fast to the superstitions of their former pagan creeds. The tenets of Christianity have become for them a set of new superstitions which they have merely added to the older ones. In a number of modern Mediterranean countries belief in the miraculous power of a Christian saint's relic goes hand in hand with a blind faith in superstitions inherited from the pagan past. Nothing is too incredible or too trivial—whether theory, material object, or some action—to become the focus of a superstition with the power to affect the entire conduct of those who believe in it.

But it is hardly necessary to quote uneducated or half-pagan people to illustrate the reality of superstitions in our times.



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Before the last war I used to know a popular High Court judge, a man as respected for his great erudition as for the crystalline logic of his mind. His main hobby was foreign travel. But the learned judge would never sail in a ship whose name began with the letter S. Another case personally known to me is that of a well-known Harley Street specialist. Whenever that great doctor had to go up a staircase in the house of a patient, he invariably counted the steps. If their number was even, he would be successful; if it was odd—the omens were less favourable. All the intellectual acumen and rational knowledge of these two men were not strong enough to outbalance whatever psychological or other causes were responsible for their superstitious beliefs.

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Are we entitled to dismiss all superstitions as the childish relics of a dark and ignorant past? Many of them are just that. But others are too powerful to be so summarily dismissed, and it is we ourselves who make them so by our ignorance and credulity.

Our ancestors incorporated certain 'superstitions' into their beliefs, morals or customs, because experience based on observation suggested that there was a certain truth behind them.

The old-fashioned farmer who does his sowing and many other jobs in accordance with certain phases of the moon is not necessarily a superstitious fool. He is no doubt acting out of an instinctive or inherited knowledge of certain time rhythms and their inter-relation in Nature. The countrywoman who treats the ailment of her child with a herb rather than the pills prescribed by the doctor may possibly be motivated by a knowledge of both Nature and the human body that medical science is only just beginning to rediscover. The man who watches carefully each seven-year cycle of his life and prepares himself for crises need not be a superstitious ignoramus who regards seven as his 'lucky number'. Instead he may possibly know that such seventh years are climacteric in life, and that human life is governed by certain numerical rhythms. Unfortunately, the majority of people degrade a knowledge such as his into a fictitious theory of 'lucky' and 'unlucky' numbers.

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The person with genuine psychic gifts is far from being a charlatan when he declares that a certain house or room has a 'good' atmosphere, while another one has a 'sinister' one. Unfortunately, the superstitious instantly turn such psychic recognition into the crude belief of a 'cursed' or 'unlucky' house.

And what about the Orient's belief in the healing efficacy of precious stones? Listen to what Charles Doughty, that great explorer and seer of the Arabian world, had to say of it: 'The Oriental opinion of the wholesome operation of precious stones, in that they move the mind with admirable beauties, remains perhaps at this day a part of the marvellous estimation of inert gems amongst us. Those indestructible elect bodies, as stars, shining to us out of the dim mass of matter, are comfortable to our fluxuous feeble souls and bodies; in this sense all gems are cordial and of an influence religious' (*Arabia Deserta*). The medieval Arab's knowledge of the healing properties of stones, too, easily degenerated into blind superstition that made of them magic fetishes and even minor deities.

The 'scientifically'-minded person dismisses many phenomena as foolish merely because the truth behind them is not yet explicable by the formulae of physical science. Quite possibly that truth may be discoverable only by methods which we generally describe as occult. (This does not necessarily imply that there is any occult significance behind the cabalistic jargon, ceremonies or trinkets that so many 'adepts' of spurious occult societies affect.)

Closely allied to 'superstitions' that are nothing but the remnants of half-forgotten esoteric knowledge are some of the symbols not only accepted but even revered by us moderns.

Is not most of the Christian (or, in fact any other) liturgy a 'superstitious' symbol of truths that few of us comprehend, and that we recognize only in their particular symbolic form? So are many of our national and civic traditions. A materialist is entitled to regard them as mere superstitions: nevertheless they probably express ancient truths long since buried under the weight of a less intuitive and more 'scientific' knowledge.

## EARLY INFLUENCES

Most superstitions, from the sublimest (as embodied in the Eucharist) to the childish one of refusing to pass under a ladder, easily gain power over us. By permeating our entire personality, they inevitably exercise a marked effect upon our relations with other people.

It does not follow, however, that man must remain a slave to his 'superstitions'. It is always open to him to separate the grain from the chaff. This implies going meticulously over the storehouse of his superstitions, and determining which are merely the thoughtlessly adopted remnants of inheritance or ignorance, and which express laws governing some hidden or half-forgotten truth. If he is unprejudiced and reasonable, he will discard the former, and try to get at the truth of the latter, thus widening his knowledge and his powers of discrimination.

What at one time he accepted thoughtlessly, and acted upon automatically, he will now handle deliberately and consciously. At one time his 'superstitions' may easily have earned him the derision of his fellows, erecting a barrier between them and himself. But his new-found balance and wisdom will break down the barrier and give him and them the comforting consciousness of speaking a common language.

PART II

HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN



## CHAPTER I

# MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

## I

### SEX SIMILARITIES

If Johnny doesn't care for football or cricket, for fisticuffs in between lessons, or Wild West stories, and would rather draw pictures, read poetry or listen to music, he is called a 'girl' or 'effeminate'. If, moreover, he should care about his appearance, love trees and flowers, and have a taste for colour, why, he would then be called what the idiom of our day calls a 'cissy'. If the gods decide that one day he should become a great artist, poet or composer, or distinguish himself in some other field, following in the steps of a Roseberry, Haldane or Balfour, or Einstein, those who derided him as effeminate will say, 'Didn't I always tell you Johnny was different from the other boys? I knew he had it in him.' His 'effeminacy' is then acknowledged as having been artistic sensibility, originality, creativeness, or what have you.

Plenty of nonsense is talked concerning the hallmarks of masculinity and femininity; as though each individual were a hundred per cent male or a hundred per cent female. Biology, physiology and psychology should have taught us by now that such an animal does not exist, and that however much the two sexes differ from one another, each of them has many attributes of the other. Most of the attributes that in parrot-like fashion we describe as either 'typically' feminine or masculine have no basis in sex. To reach their true origins we must explore the individual's heredity, somatic disposition, psychological and environmental influences, and not exclusively his sex.

The instinct for motherhood is certainly conditioned by a woman's sex; just as greater physical strength is the prerogative of man. But if, say, artistic sensitivity and love of colour were a

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predominantly feminine trait, as is commonly supposed, the majority of painters throughout the ages would have belonged to the female and not to the male sex. It is not so. Similarly, if the gift for cooking (for it is a gift) or for dress-designing were bound up exclusively with femininity, the most famous cooks in history, the chefs in the best hotels and clubs, would hardly be men, as they invariably are: neither would the majority of designers of both men's and women's clothes.<sup>1</sup> If, on the other hand, courage, endurance, resistance to disease or pain were predominantly male traits—as 'popular' opinion would have it—doctors would not be so emphatic that women are better patients than men, that they suffer pain with less complaint, and show a greater amount of both mental and physical resistance. The vocation of child-bearing alone teaches them greater endurance of pain than the average man is ever called upon to manifest.<sup>2</sup>

It is very unfortunate that the stigma of supposed 'femininity' in the case of men and of 'masculinity' in women should be with them for life. For such spurious labels invariably have negative effects upon their holders' relations with other people. In fact 'much unhappiness in many individuals can be ascribed to the

<sup>1</sup> William Morris, who took a very keen and practical interest in both cooking and clothes, went so far as to say: 'There are two things about which women know absolutely nothing, dress and cookery: their twist isn't that way. They never invented a new dish or failed to half-spoil an old one.'

<sup>2</sup> In their book *Sex and Personality*, Prof. Lewis Terman and Dr. Catherine Cox Miles give the results of a very interesting experiment. After testing several thousand men and women on the basis of lists of traits considered as characteristic of masculinity and femininity (e.g. self-assertiveness, interest in things physical and scientific, aggressiveness, on the one hand, and tenderness, artistic leanings, interest in personal adornment, on the other), they found that many 'normal' men showed higher femininity scores than women, and vice versa. They also found that age and circumstances may alter a man's or a woman's predisposition towards the supposedly opposite characteristics. Thus marriage was found to 'feminize' both women and men, but particularly the latter. A similar effect upon men was noticeable as a result of increasing age, whereas in women the corresponding increase tended to strengthen masculine traits.

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feeling of shame or guilt engendered in them when they manifest opposite sex traits'. (*Women and Men*, by Amram Scheinfeld, Chatto and Windus, p. 195.) Yet a man who prefers reading poetry or admiring painting to playing football need be as little effeminate as a woman with a gift for mechanics—masculine.

Some readers, while possibly agreeing with the last statement, may ask: 'But what about people of the one sex with traits that *genuinely* belong to the opposite one? Surely there is something wrong with them and they ought to put themselves "right"'? The truth is that not only is there nothing wrong with such people, but they have every reason to rejoice that Nature has provided them with features beyond the reach of the average member of their sex. For unless we deal with distinctly pathological cases (which form only a small minority), the added possession of traits inherent in the opposite sex—by no means at the cost of any traits inherent in the nominal sex—is wont to bring with it a fuller comprehension of life and a widening of one's entire personality.

. . . . .

Instead of trying to stifle them, most people would accept their traits of the opposite sex with gratitude if they realized that it is as *natural* to possess these as it is to possess those more typical of their own sex. An exclusively heterosexual man or woman is as rare as an exclusively homosexual one. Sigmund Freud stated, 'Man is an animal with an unmistakably bisexual disposition'. And on a different occasion, he wrote: 'I have never yet come through a single psychoanalysis of a man or a woman without having to take into account a very considerable current of homosexuality.' (*Collected Papers*, Vol. III.)

This means (and other investigators have confirmed Freud's diagnosis) that we are all fundamentally bisexual, though in the majority of people the heterosexual strain predominates so strongly that never, or only rarely, do they become aware of the bisexual (i.e. during their puberty when they may easily develop a 'crush' on some older friend of the same sex, or later in life when they find themselves in exceptional circumstances,



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such as are created by the segregation of sexes in prisons, ships, war camps and the like).

Even when pronounced, bisexuality need not express itself through ordinary sexual manifestations, but can do so purely mentally, e.g. through concentrating on certain tastes or occupations. In origin it can be either somatic or psychological, and very frequently it is both. But whatever its character, rather than stifle it shamefacedly, we ought to make the best of the opportunities with which it provides us.

## II

### THE ADORNMENT OF MAN

For some strange reason—due possibly to an instinctive chivalry on the part of men towards the opposite sex—women's transgression into the 'opposite' camp is looked at far more leniently than the corresponding male activities. No one finds anything odd in women hugging and kissing one another; the same behaviour in men would be considered, to say the least, revolting. No one thinks anything if two women live together; single men sharing a flat are usually met with suspicion. Homosexuality in women is ignored by the law and left unpunished; male homosexuality is still treated by the law with a severity whose only excuse is the ignorance that provokes it. Even in the less sophisticated days of our mothers and grandmothers masculinity in the appearance of certain women—stiff collars, tailor-made jackets, plain black hats, short hair—was accepted as being either a badge of militancy or a rebellion against 'un-workmanlike' and hampering clothes and fashions. Since those days, and in spite of the Bible's injunction that 'a woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man . . . for all that do so are abomination unto the Lord' (Deuteronomy xxii. 5) women have gone so far as to wear male trousers, sports jackets, socks and all the rest. What is more, their adoption of this most unattractive of unattractive garbs has been generally accepted as 'sensible'. If a man tried to appear in public in a woman's dress he would find himself instantly in a police court, and then behind prison bars. Even a slight extravagance on a man's

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part—the use of colour, of the more precious fabrics, such as silk or satin, or of jewellery—mark him in our days as a pervert and a ‘danger to society’.<sup>1</sup>

Yet is there anything either pathological or inherently effeminate about men dressing themselves up in finery, taking interest in beautiful materials, using scent? King Ibn Saud, the greatest warrior-statesman the Arab world has produced for many centuries, and a personification of the ‘he-man’, uses more precious scent in a week than the smartest Parisienne could afford in a year. It is less than a hundred and fifty years since men have given up paying greater attention to and spending more money on clothes than women. Before the nineteenth century much of their talk was of their velvet breeches and embroidered waistcoats (at as much as £30 each—in present money ten times that amount), of the jewel-encrusted buttons they had secured in Venice or Paris, of the shining buckles on their shoes, the satin of their mantillas. They went out of their way to dress as gorgeously and individually as ingenuity, means and the art of their tailor allowed. Moreover, they used large quantities of scent and—pace Messrs. Home Secretary and first Commissioner of the Police—used rouge both on their lips and cheeks, not to speak of the huge quantities of powder with which they whitened their complexions and wigs.

Against the mere century-and-a-half of drab male clothing we have hundreds, nay, thousands of years when it was the natural thing for men—knights and priests, statesmen and squires, scholars and merchants—to dress more extravagantly than their wives and daughters. Even in the animal kingdom it is usually the male that dons the more resplendent feathers, the more brilliant colours, the more conspicuous attire.

<sup>1</sup> To what length convention, prejudice, or sheer stupidity can go in regard to the subject of men’s clothes is shown by the attitude of American men to red ties. ‘A bright red tie is associated with homosexuality in a man’, writes Amram Scheinfeld in his comprehensive book, *op. cit.*, p. 231. In the light of that statement it would certainly be entertaining to study the reactions of Americans during the yearly meeting of the English Trades Unions Council or, in fact, during any meeting of British Socialists.

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Only after the American and French Revolutions had proclaimed the equality of all men did beauty and originality begin to disappear from male garments. So long as men did not consider themselves equal cogs in a vast machine they made every use of their ingenuity and sense of beauty to stress the individuality of their appearance. The antagonistic attitude towards colour and splendour in male attire is the mark of a civilization afraid of individualism and unresponsive to the appeal of sensuous beauty.

### III

#### . . . AND DEMOCRACY

Is it not likely that our fear of stressing what is original and individual in us (with all its sex attributes) will be reflected in our relations with other people? May it not even be responsible for some of the shallowness of which so many human relations in our day suffer?

A person who persistently tries to deny, or to suppress, what is inborn, cannot help being driven into an attitude of increasing artificiality wherein he is deprived of true enjoyment of life. For such enjoyment does not depend upon artificial stimuli or entertainments but on what we ourselves put into life. A person who expresses himself according to his innermost nature can find all the colour and entertainment he needs in his intercourse with his fellow-beings. In comparison with that, the ready-made entertainments provided by movie producers, football club managers, and all the other purveyors of artificial stimuli and soporifics, appear shallow to him. The former strengthens his sense of his personal worth and makes him feel alive; the latter are often an escape from his own personality.

'That's all very well,'—once again it is the thoughtful reader who rebels, 'but you forget that individualism such as you preach easily puts a man into opposition to democracy in whose eyes every citizen is equal.' Let us examine for a moment whether the premises of the thoughtful reader are right. The equality implied by democracy is political, legal and social. It does not depend upon, and does not demand, equality of

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character, endeavour or self-expression. If it did, it would instantly lead to the annihilation of many worthwhile traits in man. Neither does democracy imply that in *personal* intercourse we should treat everyone alike. It is precisely the value and beauty of human relations that no two are exactly the same. Into each one we have to put a different part of ourselves, and receive in return something that no other person but that particular associate is able to offer us.

Can we achieve this if our aim is to reach the 'normality' and inconspicuousness that are but other names for artificiality and drabness?

### IV

## SEX INEQUALITY

It arises from our earlier observations that it is both unwise and unscientific to ascribe certain characteristics—usually the wrong ones—to one sex, and to deride the members of the opposite sex who happen to possess them. But it is equally unwise to regard the two sexes as more or less identical, save in a few inescapable differences, as is being done by so many advocates of 'sex equality'.

Features that the two sexes have in common, though often strongly marked, are never as powerful as are those that denote their essential individuality. Even the somatic homosexual man is first and foremost a male with a male sex mechanism and the biological, physiological, and many psychological traits of a man. Likewise a homosexual woman is first and foremost a woman.

(The only cases where the border line between the two sexes is indistinct are the far rarer cases of hermaphrodites. They represent an extreme pathological condition. Moreover, surgery can restore the hermaphrodite to the sex to which he or she originally belonged, or establish him or her in the sex which is more strongly indicated.)

To belittle the fundamental differences between the two sexes is as harmful to healthy relations as is the exaggeration of them.

Men and women are equal in the sense that spiritually all humans are equal. But such equality does not imply identity.

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The organic differences, and those between their respective life-giving purposes, provide the two sexes with a different instinctive, emotional and, even, mental apparatus. Moreover, those underlying differences have established a set of duties and occupations that differ vitally for both sexes. These in turn have created traditions and customs that have become as much part of civilization as though they were expressing some natural law. They cannot be dismissed lightly as the outcome of masculine caprice or tyranny. Together all these differences have provided the two sexes with specific aptitudes and weaknesses.

In the last quarter of the century a great deal of important data on the specific aptitudes of the two sexes has been collected. The investigators have had at their disposal material that has come to light only in recent times, thanks to our greater knowledge of the nature and action of hormones, of the various glands, of the genes and chromosomes; and on the other hand, to the findings of psychology, psychoanalysis and the social sciences.

The once fashionable accusation that since such investigations were invariably undertaken by men they showed a masculine bias, can hardly be levelled at the present-day scientists. For many of them are women who, either independently or in collaboration with their male colleagues, have arrived at the same conclusions. These show that what is different between the two sexes extends further than bodily construction. Chemical reactions, too, have to be considered, glandular activity, biological resistance, functional roles and performance capacities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Read in this connection: *Physique of Women in Industry* (Industrial Research Board), *Brit. Medical Journal*, Feb. 5, 1927.

*The Measurement of Adult Intelligence*, by David Wechsler (Bailliere, Tindall & Cox, London, 1942).

*Women in Cycles of Culture*, by Anna de Koven (Putnam's, 1941).

*The Flight from Womanhood. The Masculinity-complex in Women*, by Karen Horney (*Intern. Jour. Psychoanal.*, Vol. 7, Oct. 1926).

*Genetic Studies of Genius*, Vol. III. (Harrap), by Lewis M. Terman.

*Woman's Coming of Age*, ed. by Achmalhausen and Calverton, American Book Supply Co.

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It has been found, for example, that congenitally men are better in work demanding greater physical strength and endurance (as opposed to mental endurance).<sup>1</sup>

Men are equally superior in mechanical, mathematical and structural work. Women, on the other hand, surpass men in tasks demanding light and efficient movement of the hands, light sedentary and routine activities, such as are demanded, e.g., in clerical work. Men have invariably proved superior in work that depends on team effort. Women would seem to give of their best when left to themselves, but when they have to work in a team, they are better with male colleagues than with female ones.

A man shows greater aptitude for tasks that demand complete subordination of his egotism, and thus for all kinds of abstract intellectual work. Altogether he would seem to take a more serious and professional attitude towards his work than a woman does. In illustrating this point, Dr. Margaret B. Pickel, in charge of the War Work Information Bureau of Columbia University, wrote, 'College women, if they are to be valuable members of society . . . must lay aside their reliance on any open sesame and must develop a really professional attitude towards work. Until they do, there can be little sympathy with organized efforts to push for professional advancement for women.' ('A Challenge to the College Woman,' *N.Y. Times Magazine*, March 5, 1944.) And in a paper 'Are Women a Success in Business?' (Harper's, Feb. 1928), Dorothy Durbar Bromley gives jealousy of each other, oversensitiveness, and the obtruding of their personality, as the chief reasons for women's apparent failure in business. She also mentions their lack of a fully developed sense of fair play.

Let us now turn to the creative cultural spheres. So far women have shown their equality with men in literature. They have proved, however, far inferior in painting, sculpture and music. Yet 'it cannot be believed that women have been so

<sup>1</sup> In all the athletic records without one single exception, i.e. running, jumping, swimming, tennis, etc., the achievements of male sportsmen by far surpass those of women.

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systematically deprived of opportunity through the ages as not to have developed cases of eminence had they not been inhibited not by man, but by their sex and its concomitants. Under conditions of great oppression, men of talent have emerged . . . and in some lines, certainly, women have had all the opportunity that men have enjoyed—in music, for instance', write Prof. W. Sumner and Prof. A. G. Keller in their monumental work, *The Science of Society* (Oxford University Press, Vol. I).

In journalism, on the other hand, women prove that they are quite man's equals and often even surpass him. (The names of several famous women-journalists of our day come to mind: Dorothy Thompson, Mme. Tabouis, Anna O'Hare McCormick.)

Though it may seem natural that, after having for so long been excluded from scientific study, women have produced no great inventors, it is yet surprising that even within their own domestic sphere they have invented next to nothing. (In the world of science there is, of course, the one shining exception of Mme. Curie-Sklodovska who, incidentally, proved that in spite of personal and environmental difficulties, genius, whether male or female, can triumph.) From the nursing bottle to the preserving jar and the roasting rack, from the safety pin to the zipp fastener, the thousands of little aids in clothing or household have been invented by men.

As can be seen from the preceding brief survey, the true differences between the two sexes and their natural functions have little in common with the differences that are popularly considered as denoting masculinity in women and femininity in men.

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However desirable we may consider complete economic and social equality for women, we cannot run away from the fact that Nature has from the beginning established certain fundamental laws that must in some measure interfere with the practical application of such an equality. Though individual women may be suited for full-time 'male' careers, the majority of them will always be dominated by the overwhelming demands of childbearing, motherhood and home. While childbearing

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and motherhood may be considered 'as temporary handicaps in the prosecution of a full-time professional career, the home is for women a life-long obligation,—at any rate for so long as our civilization is based on the social unit of the family.<sup>1</sup>

So long as we do not replace the family by something less personal and centring less round the woman (whether as wife, mother, or both), women can hardly aspire to the freedom that is granted (biologically and socially) to men, and consider themselves on a par with them in their professional activities. They can, of course, make adjustments—as millions of them are doing—that will enable them to combine their vocation with a profession. But such adjustments often upset the balance, and one of the two is the sufferer.<sup>2</sup>

Before continuing to investigate whether sex 'equality' is either possible or desirable in human relations, let me illustrate that problem by a personal experience. However trite that experience may appear in itself, it throws a revealing light upon the confusion caused in man-woman relations by equalitarian conditions.

At one time during the last war I worked in a Government department in which women were employed on a basis of

<sup>1</sup> Even the Russians, after unsuccessful experiments, have turned towards a policy of encouraging marriage and the private home. After the 1936 law prohibiting abortion, the U.S.S.R. has completely abandoned its former notion that woman's primary contribution was not that of rearing a family, but of performing social, economic, or other work away from the home. Accordingly, it encourages marriage and the rearing of large families. Extra bonuses are given to mothers of over seven children, and every effort is being made to strengthen the institution of the family. The Russians, the only people who have made large-scale experiments on replacing the family, and making use of women in a more 'communal' way, have evidently come to the conclusion that, humans being what they are, and certain habits and traditions being as deep-rooted as they are, wifehood, motherhood and the home represent the best means for assuring the continuance of the nation.

<sup>2</sup> Is it purely a coincidence that some of the best-known women writers have produced no children: George Eliot, the Brontë sisters, Jane Austen, Elizabeth Browning, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Edith Wharton?



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complete equality with their male colleagues. They had the same pay, rights, jobs, and so forth. Nevertheless they continued to insist upon the many little privileges that under less equalitarian conditions men would have granted them as a matter of course. Every time we males were getting into an already crowded lift, women late-comers unhesitatingly made their way forward, forcing the men to wait for the next lift. The same applied to the use of telephones, stenographers, messengers. In the canteen, women insisted upon being served first, and altogether they expected to be treated with the chivalry 'due to their sex'.

It did not take long to notice that, as a result, the women were apt to develop either a slightly aggressive and domineering attitude, or one of flattery and artificiality; and in the men an ill-disguised sense of resentment was fostered. These effects were hardly surprising. For as soon as we disregard fundamental laws (or traditions), bewilderment is created. This, in turn, leads to obliqueness in human relations.

Whether we like it or not, we have to admit that sex equality is an intellectual fiction, unsupported by facts, and that 'the very existence of the two sexes is based on their dissimilarities. Nature has dictated that there must be inequalities between men and women in make-up, functions, and behaviour . . . inequalities in rate of development, in which the female leads the male; inequalities in size and strength, where the male leads the female; inequalities in resistance to disease and death, where the female is ahead; inequalities in sexual and reproductive functions, with far heavier burdens imposed on the woman . . . inequalities in range and movement, whereby the male is given greater freedom of action, but placed at the same time under greater stress and more exposure to danger' (*Women and Men*, Amram Scheinfeld, p. 302).

# MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY

## V

### THE FEMALE CONTRIBUTION

In spite of what the various sciences, experience and common sense tell us, we try to push along towards complete sex equalization like stubborn mules, and then express surprise at the growing maladjustments in inter-sex relations.

Civilization, as it exists with all its obvious achievements and shortcomings, is chiefly, though by no means exclusively, the work of men. Perhaps as a consequence of this, women of ambitious disposition have always accepted the standards set up by men as the only valid ones. Thus they involuntarily help to create the illusion that female standards and achievements are inferior to those of men, and that to be 'equal' is to be like a man.

This purely artificial 'inferiority' on the part of women became real when women began to step into what were distinctly men's jobs. Naturally they could not expect to reach in them the high standards that men have established by centuries of tradition and training. This in turn has strengthened women's feeling as competitors. Yet their inborn traits are not competitive but complementary. However much a man might wish, he cannot give birth to a child nor breast-feed it. However much a woman may 'envy' a man, she cannot fertilize the female egg.

Because men have given our civilization a character in which achievement is measured chiefly by material results, such as power, wealth, and so forth, women have come to consider that such achievements are equally desirable for themselves. In so doing they involuntarily belittle the value of their own specific contribution, which cannot be measured by standards of wealth or power. However intangible the purely human aspect of their contribution may be, it cannot be replaced by anything men can produce.

It is true: the female contribution does not bring in easy cash returns. But do many of the qualities from which true civilization

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and culture profit? Have Socrates and Beethoven, Shakespeare and Milton, Pasteur and Van Gogh, and a thousand other leaders in thought and artistic and scientific creativeness, been rich, or wielded the worldly power of politicians, captains of industry, financiers and generals?<sup>1</sup>

‘This is all very well’ (our thoughtful reader once again raises his voice), ‘but what about the millions of women who are forced by the conditions of a man-created civilization to earn their living and who for some reason or other are deprived of the rewards of marriage and motherhood?’

The question is both legitimate and topical, even though the answer to it is obvious. Both sexes must together establish conditions that will enable women to concentrate on those jobs in which they can be most themselves rather than imperfect copies or competitors of men.

‘This above all: to thine own self be true  
And it must follow as the night the day  
Thou canst not then be false to any man.’

Only by choosing jobs that demand and bring out what is most specific in them can women make their greatest contribution to the common pool, and, incidentally, enrich from ‘within’ their own personalities.

It is not the purpose of this book to enumerate what such jobs for women would be. This has been done by a great many investigators, and there exists a large literature on the subject. But it may be stated briefly that, in addition to the jobs that suggested themselves when women’s specific aptitudes were mentioned, occupations connected with healing, education and

<sup>1</sup> In this connection it may be worth mentioning that in the U.S.A., the richest country in the world, ‘almost 70 per cent of the nation’s liquid wealth is owned or controlled by women or held in trust for them’ (see, *Do the Women own America?* by Geraldine Sartain, *Amer. Mercury*, Nov. 1941; and *Women and Wealth*, by Mary Brauch, University of Chicago Press, 1934).

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social work, give women fullest scope for genuine self-expression. The stage, literature, the ballet obviously provide natural outlets for the more artistic types, as indeed they have done in the past when women as a whole did not have to earn their own living and did not dream of achieving 'equality' with men. Then there are certain branches of science, especially those that are the modern equivalent of occupations to which women have always been drawn: dietetics, food chemistry and processing, the planning of beauty preparations or new fabrics; and all the many branches concerned with the home, such as furniture, fittings, household utensils, heating, sanitation, decoration; and then again botany and horticulture.

I have left women's most significant contribution to the last. I am referring to the spheres of spiritual activity such as ethics and humanitarianism. The balance of our civilization is so heavily weighted towards materialism and towards assessing all values of life in material terms that its breakdown is not unlikely unless that balance is somehow redressed. It can hardly be accidental that today such a collapse is symbolized by the word 'atom', the foundation and quintessence of matter. Even in the past it was women who spiritualized and refined material life and relationships between individuals. They have already been active in improving labour conditions for members of their own sex and of children; in all forms of child welfare; and, last but not least, in trying to prevent war. Those efforts alone indicate some of the directions of their future contribution. And apart from their salaried work, their daily influence over the men of their immediate circle can contribute greatly to humanizing life in general.

That women's professional efforts must occasionally overlap with those of men is inevitable in a civilization as complex and mechanized as ours. What, however, would seem to matter, is that their guiding aspiration should be towards occupations with a distinctly feminine character. This does not necessarily imply that a woman with specifically masculine traits and gifts should not cultivate these, but those aspirations and leanings

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in them that are typically feminine should be encouraged and cultivated.

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We shall hardly reach the desired goal if women receive the same education as men. The Russians have already realized the pitfalls of co-education, and having tried it out over a number of years, introduced after the second World War a fairly rigorous educational separation of the sexes. In the U.S.A., where co-education has gone further than in any other great country, many educationists are wondering whether the system is really desirable.

But even more important is the problem of advanced education for women. The years during which a woman is most intensely preoccupied with her career as a wife, mother and homekeeper, are roughly from 18 to 35. Many of those who choose a higher education find themselves completely absorbed by their duties in the home. So, although they are greatly enriched by their education, and, as a result of it, able to share their husbands' intellectual interests, the 'vocational' part of their education is lost; on the other hand, after the childbearing period has passed and their children have grown up, they find themselves with time on their hands and little to occupy them.

Obviously that is the time when they could concentrate on educating themselves. Their situation indicates that there is room for special colleges for adult women, as in Denmark, in which they could learn the hundred and one things for which they have a natural inclination—from cultural pursuits to social service work, from the many branches of science concerned with the home and health in the home, to art and craft work.

What applies to the middle-aged wife applies even more to the widow and the divorcée. Since widows by far outnumber widowers and the divorcée is becoming an even more permanent symptom of our civilization, there is much room for catering for their occupational and educational needs.

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It has already been mentioned that the employment of women in specifically masculine jobs tends to have unfavourable

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effects upon man-women relationships. Hardly less desirable are the effects of the attitude adopted by many modern women outside their work. I realize that this is dangerous ground for a man to tread upon, but the subject is too relevant to our subject to be neglected or glossed over with 'male chivalry'.

The average man may not feel inclined to admit what are his true reactions to the sight of women parading in men's trousers and jacket, trying to move in as manly a fashion as they are able to adopt, drinking in pubs, smoking in streets, breaking into the easier and rougher slang of his own sex, and altogether going out of their way to be as little different from him as their constitution and body allow. For such fashions and behaviour make him feel acutely uncomfortable; and this is hardly to be wondered at, as he is placed in an awkward position, and consciously or sub-consciously resents it. Instinctively he desires a woman to be different from himself, that is, to be womanly. Instinctively he feels the urge to assume a chivalrous and protective role, and this role is difficult to adopt towards someone dressing, moving, and behaving altogether like himself, and copying the least attractive of his own ways.

There is very little men can do about this new aspect of the man-woman relationship, so upsetting to natural balance. It is for women to realize that to the average 'normal' man—especially if he is strongly sensitive to the feminine appeal—a woman's form in male garb is only a little less revolting than the sight of men walking about in women's clothes would be to women; that the sight of women drinking in pubs and smoking in the streets is just as embarrassing to him as the sight of a man using powder and lipstick *coram populo* would be to her.

However much a man may be accustomed to these new ways, he is never likely to overcome the sense of resentment it causes. Instead of the free and easy intercourse that women seem to imagine they can achieve by their manly habits, they create an atmosphere in which such intercourse becomes impossible. The man finds it hard to treat them either with the respect or the chivalry that instinctively he would like to show, and, in his bewilderment, becomes either vulgar or more indifferent than he would otherwise be.

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And in all spheres of life the establishment of the satisfactory balance, the sound relationship, depends on the sexes adopting complementary, not competitive roles. A woman carrying heavy loads is as upsetting a sight as a woman dressed like a man. Neither is being herself. Both mentally and physically they are doing violence to their nature. What civilization demands of both men and women is not to be 'equals', but partners and fellow-workers, one sex superior in some way, the other superior in different ways. And happy inter-sex relationships depend in equal measure upon the male and the female contributions. Without them the balance of social life becomes upset, and, even more vital, the balance of intimate intercourse and thus, of sex life.

## CHAPTER II

# THE INFLUENCE OF SEX

### I

#### REALITY OR OFFICIAL MORALITY?

As a rule we admit the influence of sex upon our relations with others only when these are distinctly coloured by sexual attraction or sexual aversion. When this is the case, we are willing to concede that no other single influence affects them more potently. There is no need therefore to deal with the more self-evident effects of sex upon human relations, with its enriching powers when love is present, with the almost inevitably destructive effects it has on human relations when it is nothing but an animal urge.

What is less generally acknowledged is that even in relationships completely free of recognizable sexual attraction, such as exist, for instance, between 'normal' men, or 'normal' women, sex influences can be a contributory factor. Since very few men or women (if any) are exclusively heterosexual, it is not surprising that this should be so. However unaware we may be of the particular sexual attractiveness of a person with whom we are linked by ties outside the erotic sphere, we may nevertheless respond to it subconsciously. One famous statesman, in all ways a completely 'normal' man, devoted to his wife and children and an example of moral rectitude, invariably chose his private secretaries from among tall, good-looking young men. While he paid all due attention to their professional qualifications, he unfailingly gave preference to a type whose physical attractiveness struck some subconscious sympathetic chord in him.

Naturally it makes all the difference to a man's relations with others—colleagues, political associates, employers or employees—whether his sexual life gives him a sense of fulfilment



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or one of frustration; whether he follows its demands with a guilty conscience or with peace of mind; whether he is obsessed with it to the extent of perpetual repression or to that of unbridled promiscuity or, on the other hand, affords it its rightful place within the scheme of his own temperament.

Since a society cannot be contented unless the individuals of which it is composed reflect in their relations with their fellows their own contentment, it is finally society that benefits when the sex life of its members is satisfactory and, conversely, suffers if that life is an unhappy one. Indisputably a happy sex life is more likely to result from an enlightened, realistic and natural (e.g., as willed by Nature) attitude than from one based on ignorance, prejudice, or a moral code that shuts both eyes to what is inherent in the nature of sex.

Today, as we all know, a deep gulf separates the moral doctrines propagated by 'authority' (represented chiefly by the Christian churches), and the sexual conduct of the masses to whom those doctrines are meant to apply. The advocates of that morality naturally do not blame their doctrines, but the refusal of the masses to abide by them.

Is their attitude really justified? Again and again sincere and high-minded men have tried to act upon those doctrines and yet have found them inadequate for guiding so complex and powerful a force as that of sex. Even in the days when the teaching of the churches meant a great deal to the masses, official sex morality failed to guide the conduct of individuals.

To be of practical assistance, a moral doctrine must not merely represent a desirable ideal, but also acknowledge the reality of the forces that hinder a man in trying to reach it. If it does less, it remains a pious platitude, theological theory or intellectual abstraction, with no reference to everyday human problems.

The official morality that permeates our attitude to sex (without being able to guide our conduct) stands on the premise that the exclusive aim of sex is procreation. Apart from this, sexual activity is not legitimate, that is, not in its own right. This is the view of the churches, the chief propagators of official sex morality. Now let us look at their doctrine not from a

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materialistic-scientific point of view but from that spiritual one which is the birthright of the churches. When we do that, we find to our surprise that by implication that doctrine denies what it is supposed to uphold: the spiritual nature of man and what is part of it, namely, the immortality of his soul. If man can immortalize himself only by producing progeny, he evidently is not possessed of an immortal soul. The doctrine of the churches reveals itself therefore as the fruit of an essentially materialistic philosophy.

In spite of the inescapable implications of the church doctrine, man *is* of the spirit, and endowed with an immortal soul. His immortality rests in his soul and does *not* depend upon procreation and, thus, sex. Though the human race *in toto* needs procreation for *its* immortality, the individual does not.

If procreation is the alpha and omega of sex, where does love come into it? To regard human love merely in terms of its value as mainspring of procreation is to reduce humanity's status to that of cattle: 'personality, as it were, disintegrates in the process of begetting children. The impersonal species triumphs over personality.'<sup>1</sup> However decisive the aspect of procreation, it is only one of several which, together, lend full significance to our sex life.

It would be fatuous to pretend that it is only the promiscuous members of the human race who indulge their sexual urge with no reference whatsoever to their desire to beget or bear children. One of the characteristics that distinguish human beings from beasts is that they do not perform the sexual act during a mating season only, or when one of the partners is 'on heat'. Instead they follow their own free will. If in their case Nature's purpose of that act were the same as it is in that of the animals, exclusively procreation, there would seem no reason why they, too, should not be restricted to a mating season.

And what about married couples who have already produced all the children they are able to support? Is sexual intercourse to be denied them, possibly twenty or more years before

<sup>1</sup>Nicolas Berdyaev, in *The Russian Idea*, p. 176. Geoffrey Bles, 1947.

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their sexual urge has abated? And what about married women who for some reason or other are unable to bear children? Are they to be condemned to celibacy? And their husbands, too? In a monogamous society such as ours they would evidently be unable to find satisfaction in extra-marital liaisons.

Even if it were true that procreation is the exclusive justification of sex, the latter would still form its basis and be inseparable from it. Can we then approve of procreation and yet denounce sex? Even St. Paul found it impossible to reconcile this contradiction in his own condemnation of the 'flesh'. As a result, he bestowed upon the churches the heritage of a doctrine that is as ambiguous as it is dangerous. (See in that connection my *Sex, Life and Faith*, p. 213.) For does not a condemnation of the flesh imply that of life as well? It is hardly to be wondered at that official Christianity 'has not made up its mind to condemn life and birth' (Berdyayev, *The Russian Idea*, p. 226). Orthodoxy seems to be so strongly dominated by the idea of the crucifixion that it forgets the resurrection!

It is this doctrine of implicit anti-spirituality and of inner contradiction and ambiguity that for hundreds of years has dominated our attitude to the subject of sex. What else could the result be but confusion, uneasy consciences, furtiveness, secrecy and hypocrisy?

## II

### IS REFORM POSSIBLE?

Though as individuals we may take a saner view of sex, as a society we still identify ourselves with the official doctrines of premarital chastity, and the fundamental sinfulness of sex in most of its aspects; or, as the late Lord Baldwin, that epitome of conventional morality, put it, in 1936, 'whatever may be our behaviour and opinions as private individuals, we are still publicly and as a people Puritan'? Put bluntly, this means: one morality for the shop window, and another one behind the shutters.

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We raise an admonitory finger at the virile young man who indulges in sexual intercourse before marriage, yet we do next to nothing to create such social and economic conditions as would enable him to get married at the time when his sex is at its highest potency. Under the existing conditions, for which the moralist, the churches and the puritan are as responsible as anyone else, what is it but sheer hypocrisy on their part to condemn the young who give vent to their natural desires? 'One cannot but view with concern a trend which leads to a greater proportion of physiologically mature males remaining in the unmarried state until after they have attained the age of twenty-one years. . . . The effects under present conditions are almost uniformly bad both to the individual and to society.' (*Social Health and Morals*, by I. Fraser Mackenzie, M.D., Gollancz, 1947, p. 155.)

Authority, in whatever guise, keeps preaching chastity and abstinence and condemning their opposite; on the other hand it permits, and often even encourages, countless manifestations that render that abstinence as difficult as possible. We only have to point to the provocative character of so many films, the suggestiveness of certain advertisements and posters, many types of easily obtainable magazines and books, to realize that it is not the young themselves, but society and its official moral guardians who are 'to blame for permitting abuses of freedom which make self-control difficult in the sexual sphere' (*ibid.*, p. 156).

Of the many causes of sexual maladjustment and final unhappiness in marriage, probably the most frequent is ignorance. This is especially true in the Anglo-Saxon countries, with their traditions of treating sex in a puritanically negative or furtive manner. Ignorance is the result not merely of lack of sex education, but of conventional and fundamentally distorted notions bred in childhood and passed on from one generation to another. For our immediate purpose it is enough to deal with one particular aspect of this maleducation.

Many a man who steps into marriage sees in his wife a

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symbol of his boyhood notions of femininity: she is physically weak and therefore in need of his protection; and sexually modest, and therefore passive and undemonstrative. If she does not conform with these notions, he suffers something of a shock. He has almost certainly never been taught that he ought to adjust his own sexual reactions to hers, and as no thought of so doing occurs to him, he suffers disappointment. This, in turn, leads to impatience, irritability, and other undesirable reaction on his part. If, on the other hand, the wife, with her keener instinct for everything appertaining to sex, tries to readjust herself to his (quite unreasonable) expectations, she probably has to do violence to her nature and stifle a great deal of what she had intuitively hoped to express in her sexual life.

Now let us turn to the premarital ideas of the wife. To her, the future husband represents strength, power, domination. If she finds that he falls short of these notions (which presumably he does), she too feels cheated. She may try to fight against her disappointment, but is not likely to overcome it completely. With great surprise she discovers that he is less resistant to illness than herself, and that under strain his endurance is inferior to hers. She has of course never been taught that such weaknesses on his part are inherent in his male sex; so she attributes them to some individual shortcoming peculiar to him. If she is possessed of a nature in which the motherly instinct predominates, she will instinctively develop towards him the attitude of a protecting mother or nurse. Thus she may help him. But the natural balance of the husband-wife relationship will be somewhat upset and perhaps never again re-established. If, however, her mother instinct is not sufficiently strong to make her adopt the 'motherly role', she will probably merely lose much of her inclination and desire to accord her husband the respect she had once thought he merited.

A little more factual and less conventional knowledge on either side would have enabled them to avert some of the shocks and disappointments with which many marriages begin and which lead sooner or later to an overt or covert disintegration of the marital union.

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If since 1939 sexual promiscuity has been on the increase; if marriages keep disintegrating almost before husband and wife have had time to settle down; if the consulting rooms of psychologists, psychoanalysts and psychiatrists are crowded with people who have made a mess of their sexual lives; and police courts have to deal day in day out with what is called sex crime (and what in most cases is the result of ignorance, maladjustment or repression) there is little reason to blame the victims and culprits themselves. The blame belongs to the advocates of a morality that has robbed sex of its truth and naturalness, and replaced both by prejudices, ignorance, ambiguity, hypocrisy, or escapism.

What we have to tell the young is not that sex is sinful and procreation its only justification, but that it should always express something deeper than itself, namely love, and that love by its very nature is spiritual, sex being merely its material symbol. In consequence, we should tell them that sex should always be the expression of something spiritual, and not merely of a physical desire.

But our words will fall upon deaf ears if at the same time we keep doing everything to undermine whatever remnants of spiritual beliefs the young might hold. Or if we continue to encourage all the material manifestations of life to the detriment of the spiritual ones; an exclusively materialistic science at the expense of culture; utilitarian values instead of human ones; rationalism instead of faith in an 'unprovable' God and the power of the spirit. 'If the gospel of materialism is the only true one', the young seem to be saying, 'why should we suddenly have to become spiritual-minded when sex comes into question?' They sense on the part of their 'moral' leaders not only lack of logic but hypocrisy as well, and thus feel the more justified in disregarding their injunctions.

It is the birthright of youth to be idealists. Most of them hanker instinctively after an early monogamous union, in which the material elements of sex can be fused with the spiritual ones of love. What pushes them into promiscuity, or into sexual frustration and maladjustment, is not innate immorality but the defects of the civilization in which they have to live, and

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the education which they are given or, more often, the lack of any sex-education at all. If sex is to become an inspiring and not a degrading influence in their lives, and to advance rather than hinder their relations with their fellow-men, the accompanying problems have to be tackled from a dozen different angles at the same time, and must not be treated as though sex were something leading its independent life in a vacuum.

No solution to these problems can come from the young themselves. The onus is on the preachers, the educators, the leaders of youth, and all those who are ultimately responsible for the sort of civilization in which the young have to live.

### CHAPTER III

## SOME ASPECTS OF LOVE

### I

### CONSCIOUS CULTIVATION OF LOVE

Since love—whether as *amor* or as *caritas*—has the faculty of (and provides the means for) rendering moral conduct less arduous than it would be without it, all the great religions from Buddhism to Christianity have made of it their core. This alone implies its power for good in human relations. Not unlike electricity, love *qua* love generates certain energies unobtainable by any other means, and, like religion, it sharpens and deepens our vision. (It is a fallacy that love blinds us. It is not love but infatuation which does that; for infatuation is not a reaching out to another being but merely the urge to satisfy our physical desire for that being.)

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Even when love is not directed solely towards the person we are 'in love with', it still has the effect of vitalizing us and enhancing our awareness. Hence its importance in ordinary human intercourse.

Only to a very few exceptional individuals, such as Jesus or St. Francis, is it given to love a great number of people with the depth that the average person reserves for his one beloved alone. But though our sentiments may have neither the ardour nor the all-personal quality of a saint's love, and though we may call them merely sympathy or affection, their ingredients do not differ from those that go into 'being in love'.

For the ordinary person the main difference between such loving and 'being in love' lies in the absence of sexual desire in the former. But both bring about a quickening of our entire being. In common parlance we speak of 'loving' music, or



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horses, or gardening, or whatever it may be that makes our pulse beat faster, and increases our enjoyment of life. If we 'love' any of these, we feel intensified in ourselves, and inspired by a greater zest than we normally feel. What does this mean? That the loved thing or activity makes us more aware of living. The object of our love serves merely as a focus for this awareness. But we cannot become fully aware of an object, unless we identify ourselves with it. To achieve this, we have to forget our own self. Would it not be right therefore to say that love, awareness and selflessness are identical or, at least, that they represent different manifestations of the same state of being?

We know from personal experience that if we love games, or poetry, or collecting stamps, we make it our business to become more proficient in their enjoyment, and for their sake even go out of our way to make sacrifices. Yet hardly ever do we trouble to cultivate our innate ability to love people. That such cultivation is bound to improve our relations with them seems self-evident. It is only a little less evident that it must increase our own enjoyment of life as well.

Our faculty of loving is a gift, latent in everyone, though cultivated by few. Yet we take so little trouble over cultivating it, not because of some powerful handicap, such as hatred, vice, or some innate weakness on our part, but because of mere indifference, the *vis inertiae*. The antidote to this is effort. What the effort should be is implied by the very nature of love. It must be directed towards converting some of our self-absorption into identification with others.

## II

### INEQUALITIES

#### *A. Inequalities Outside our Control*

Let us call the imaginary hero in the following story—characters in action illustrating the principle underlying their action so much more vividly than would an abstract analysis—let us call him conventionally Mr. Strong; and the equally imaginary heroine, Miss Gentle.

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Both Mr. Strong and Miss Gentle happen to be in the throes of love, though fortunately, not for one another. In fact they do not even know one another, and each plays a part in a separate little morality tale.

Mr. Strong is in love with a lady, whose name does not concern us. What does concern us is to learn whether or not his passion is reciprocated. Yet that is the one point on which we are left in the dark. Mr. Strong himself, in fact Mr. Strong in particular, is quite unable to enlighten us on this vital matter. Yet what would he not give to know the answer! His whole happiness, nay, his very life (so he avows), hangs upon it. Unfortunately, the only person who could provide it, is the very last one to oblige. For she is not among those who carry their heart on their sleeve.

On certain days Mr. Strong flatters himself that she is not indifferent to him. There had been a word or two, a gesture, however fleeting, a certain inflection in her voice from which he feels entitled to deduce that his attentions are not displeasing to her. But there is no certainty about his hopes; in truth, the very opposite. For on other days she goes out of her way to encourage the advances of his worst competitors and keeps him in a state of suspense that a man of less ardent passion would hardly be able to bear. But it is precisely on the days when her cruelty is at its highest degree—for what else but cruelty on her part could make him suffer as he does?—that he is most acutely conscious of his passion for her. We might even say that it is doubtful whether the flames that devour him would burn quite so fiercely were it not for the uncertainty and the pangs of jealousy to which the lady's cruelty condemns him. For, to tell the truth, it is not the first time in Mr. Strong's life that things have happened in precisely this manner, and that he has suffered from the miseries of love. And on each occasion, the less certain he was of his fate and the more numerous the causes for his jealousy, the stronger waxed his love. On the other hand, certainty poured cold water over it: it took the aching delight out of his heart, an ache that was the true measure of his

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passion. If the lady of his choice should ever come to admit that she fully shared his sentiments, before long these would melt like snow in the sun, and, in the end, turn to nothing stronger than a mild sense of sympathy or, even more vapid, indifference.

Such is the contrary nature of Mr. Strong's passion. It feeds not on fulfilment but on expectations; not on the sense of perfect trust in the sentiments of the beloved, but on jealousy of her favours.

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Things are otherwise with Miss Gentle. She can never love unless she is sure that it is the spark from the man's heart that has set hers alight. Indifference on his part, or interest in other women, would instantly stifle whatever feelings she might nurse for him. She can generate and give affection only if she receives it, and her love cannot be a bliss unless it be underwritten by certainty. A loving word will cause her as deep a thrill as Mr. Strong experiences whenever the lady of his choice bestows favours upon his competitors.

Yet do not imagine, please, that Miss Gentle is a romantic or a sentimentalist. She is a most level-headed woman who abhors sentimentality. All I am trying to convey about her is that one-sided, uncertain love is quite incomprehensible to her; and the only love that she considers worthy of that name is one that flows like a big river whose waters are formed by two equal streams.

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It is very fortunate that Miss Gentle and Mr. Strong have never met. Or perhaps they have; but they are not likely to have taken much notice of one another. And if humanity consisted only of the Strong's and the Gentles, both female and male, it would presumably soon die out.

Mr. Strong and Miss Gentle represent, for better or worse, two extreme cases in the textbook of love. The majority of people combine within themselves features of both. Hence the heartbreaks, the misunderstandings in so many love relationships. How much more smoothly would these run if such contradictory traits as go into the making of Mr. Strong and

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Miss Gentle did not so often exist side by side within the same breast. But Nature seldom distributes her bounties in accordance with clear-cut rules. And so a lover who, like Miss Gentle, desires certainty in love, may yet in this or that moment be strengthened in her emotions by jealousy or uncertainty.

There are a hundred other ways in which the different ingredients of a love disposition can be mixed. Countless people fall in love with one another even though their love-dispositions are anything but mutually complementary. Is there much that can be done about the ensuing difficulties?

Or shall we not concede that these very difficulties are necessary to our education and experience in this specialized sphere of human relations?

A psychologist would probably state that since in Mr. Strong's make-up there is a considerable dose of masochism, he can achieve happiness in love only when he suffers from the pangs of jealousy and uncertainty. A moralist would presumably say that Miss Gentle's attitude to love approximates far more closely to the ideal than does Mr. Strong's, and that it is far more 'natural'. But neither judgment would take us very far, or provide us with practical guidance. Can in fact such guidance be given?

Probably not. In this particular department of human relations no amount of reasoned doctrines will have a penny-weight's effect against the promptings of instinct, however disastrous these may appear to the uninvolved looker-on.

Both Mr. Strong and Miss Gentle, and the millions of people who carry within themselves varying blends of the opposing love dispositions, merely suggest that there exist certain fundamental factors in human relations that are practically beyond our control. Whether we like it or not, we have to make the best of them, and have to accept them without struggle (though with circumspection) as the given material out of which our lives have to be shaped. No amount of knowledge, or discipline, can bring about radical changes in our love disposition. For that disposition is not a caprice on the part of Nature, nor something deliberately chosen by ourselves. On the contrary, it is the inevitable result of many contributory factors and

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influences: physiological, psychological, intellectual, environmental, and so forth. So long as there is nothing distinctly pathological in the disposition (when only proper treatment can hope to bring about the desired adjustment), we have to accept it as inevitable in our individual make-up, and avoid doing violence to it.

### *B. Inequalities within our Control*

One of the most common, and probably most tragic, of such inequalities is that of unequal emotions. When one partner loves far more intensely than the other, the balance of the relationship immediately becomes upset, and as a result, one of the lovers (or both) is bound to suffer. The chief sufferer is generally the one who loves more intensely, or whose love-potential, as it might be called, is stronger—stronger, that is, in that particular set of circumstances.

In all human relations the sufferer is liable to be the one who gives more than he receives (unless his attitude enables him to find spiritual compensations.) However, in a love match, we deal not with material or utilitarian values but with emotions at their most fundamental. And where these are concerned, reason finds it difficult to make allowances for the existing inequality.

What complicates the situation is the complete absence of objective standards for assessing the strength of emotions. The man who appears to be putting less into his love than the woman may really be giving everything that his love-potential enables him to give. Since, however, the woman's love-potential may be far greater, she will probably regard his contribution as inadequate. However much she may suffer in consequence, and however much he may realize this, he obviously cannot give more than it is in him to give.

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Inequality of the love-potential is among the most frequent causes of unhappiness in married life. Once the marriage has lasted for some time, the ardour of the one partner may possibly abate; and the less intense feelings of the other may—if other-

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wise the marriage is satisfactory—gain some enrichment from greater knowledge of the mate and interests in common. But often the union breaks up before it has had time to benefit from such gradual adjustments.

The partner who loves 'less' can do very little to relieve the tension caused by inequalities of the love-potential. He cannot increase the volume or the intensity of his feelings. All he can do is to try to understand the position sympathetically.

As usual in life, it is the 'richer' of the two who must meet the poorer half-way. He may not be able to curb his feelings, but what he can do is to refrain from manifesting them too openly, that is, not beyond what the other person is able either to receive or to reciprocate. Thus a *modus vivendi*, satisfactory to both, can be established. Though the two partners cannot become equals in so far as the strength of their respective feelings is concerned, they can at least be spared the sense of inequality in their attitude towards one another. Unless such self-restraint is exercised (and, admittedly, this is a task that calls for an exceptional amount of patience and self-control), the emotional affluence of the one lover is bound to be either misunderstood or felt as irritating by the other. This, in turn, may contribute to reducing his, or her, original affection. It happens frequently in marriages that the intensity of feelings demonstrated by one mate<sup>1</sup> induces the other to withdraw more and more, until finally little emotion is left.

Those who are unable easily to hide their feelings consider the less demonstrative mate cold or callous. As a result, they become impatient and intolerant, and cannot see the other person's point of view. There is no antidote to intolerance but tolerance. The requisite kind of tolerance can only be born out of a sincere effort to understand fully the nature, possibilities and limitations of the 'offender'. Only such tolerance will make it possible to accept the other person's supposed frigidity for what it really is, and ungrudgingly. Patience and tolerance on the part of the more passionate lover can achieve far more than

<sup>1</sup> In Great Britain this condition is more typical of women than of men. In Latin and Slav countries it can be found among both women and men.

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can his love with all its burning power. In time they may even add new fuel to the affection of the other person.

### *C. Inequalities of Age*

A type of love relationship that creates its own and very grave difficulties and one which, incidentally, is usually given less attention than it deserves, is that existing between people of very unequal age.

For all practical purposes the problem of such relationships can be reduced to that of the elder partner. For the man or woman of forty or more who falls in love with someone twenty years younger, the matter is far more serious than for the young partner. The young fall in love with the elderly far less frequently, except for certain passionate outbreaks during or just after puberty. Otherwise it is normal for youth to seek love among the young. But it is not necessarily 'normal' for the more advanced in age to fall in love with those of their own age group. Quite as often the very opposite happens. And it is a complete fallacy to imagine that because a man or a woman has reached forty or more, the fire of their passion burns lower than that of their juniors. Knowledge and experience of life may help them to temper their passion; but it does not follow that it will enable them to keep it under complete control. The example of Goethe—to quote but one case famous in history—reveals that an otherwise exceptionally well-balanced and 'reasonable' grandfather can fall in love as passionately in his seventies as he did when he was a young man in his twenties.

There are many factors to enhance the depth of the older person's emotions. Many of the temptations and thrills that appear eminently desirable to the young have shown over the years how false or overrated they are; the entertainments and distractions that mean a great deal in younger days have lost much of their savour, or proved their evanescence; other pleasures, such as certain types of adventure or physical exertions, may no longer be within reach. On the other hand, human bonds and all human values will have grown in importance. So, once the middle-aged have fallen in love, they find

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support for their passion not in emotions alone but also in reason. For reason, supported by experience, tells them that the attachment to which their love is to open the door is infinitely more valuable than the idols they had worshipped in youth, and found wanting.

For the young, love is above all an adventure and the key to a new world. But it is only one of many new worlds which they hope to explore and conquer. For those of forty or more, love is not merely an adventure, and its thrill is no longer that of novelty. First and foremost it will be for them an escape from loneliness into a stability that, with increasing age, becomes one of the most worthwhile things in life. But love represents for them also the ideal of personal service. And at their age, to help and to give is more desirable than merely to receive.

It is not to be wondered at that, while the young can overcome disappointment in love comparatively easily, to those of more advanced age it may be a blow from which they can never quite recover, even though they may succeed in repressing or sublimating its effects.

. . . . .

Very often love relationships between people separated by twenty or more years end in failure and tragedy. This applies particularly to cases where the younger partner is only in the twenties. (Where both people are of more advanced age, say forty and sixty respectively, the chances of success are much greater.) Yet though such relationships are by their very nature difficult, there is no compelling reason why they should not succeed.

What has been said earlier in this chapter about inequalities of the love-potential applies particularly to the situation under discussion. For, as a rule, it is the deeper love on the part of the older person that is likely to provoke failure. (I am, of course, not referring to the sexual infatuation of the elderly roué 'falling in love' with a pretty face or a shapely pair of legs, nor to the jaded woman of advanced age who tries to satisfy the last stirrings of her sex nature by pursuing gigolos.) Thus



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such relationships call for even greater patience and self-discipline on the part of the older person than are required by people more equally matched. (See also the chapter on 'The Old and the Young'.)

### III

#### PAID COMPANIONSHIP

Perhaps the subject of what is commonly called a paid companionship should not be included in a chapter dealing with love. But since the subject is as closely related to loneliness as it is to love—do not the two in many ways merely imply an approach, from different directions, to the same problem?—there might be justification for including it here.

Only the saint, so deeply in love with all humanity that he can dispense with attachment to a single individual, and the cynic, contemptuous of humanity, can bear loneliness with equanimity. The ordinary person finds loneliness harder to bear than poverty or even dishonour. No voice addresses him in more bitter tones than the one that reminds him of having failed to establish a worthwhile bond with a lover, friend, or companion. The pleasures of the lonely man are seldom more than half-pleasures; his sorrows weigh upon him more heavily than do those of the man who can share them with another person. So the person deprived, for some reason or other, of the solace of a more 'normal' companionship, may have to fall back on one obtained for money.

It has become almost a tradition to feel superior to (if not actually contemptuous of) people who have to seek paid companionships. In the early 'twenties there appeared a successful novel by one of our leading *littérateurs*. For several hundred pages he lavished his polished style, sardonic wit, and unconcealed contempt on women dependent upon paid companions and on those for whom such companionship was the only means of livelihood. The success the novel enjoyed suggests that the views of its author were shared by his readers. Presumably both the author and his public held the view that anyone who has to buy companionship as he might procure his

## SOME ASPECTS OF LOVE

groceries is giving evidence of some fundamental human inadequacy.

No doubt such a viewpoint is often justifiable, for many who resort to paid companions must have some psychological or other defect which has precluded the formation of closer, more normal attachments.

But there is another side to our problem as well, one that seems to have occurred neither to the successful novelist nor his readers. Are not most companionships in some way paid for, even though the commercial side of the transaction is covered up by all sorts of pretence, custom and convention? We pay for companionships by the special effort we make to achieve and keep them; by the brilliance of our conversation, the attractiveness of our manners, our charm, our wit, the emotions we expend, the hospitality we extend. Not many relationships are based entirely on mutual altruism. There is always a certain amount of expense to be incurred. Even sex attraction—among the most potent, though not necessarily safest, causes of intimate bonds—must be regarded as a kind of commodity with which we pay for a companionship that otherwise might be beyond our reach.

So the elderly man or woman—for it is usually the elderly—who barter for his escape from loneliness as you might barter for a new piece of furniture does not differ fundamentally from his, or her, more fortunate fellow who has at disposal other treasures with which to pay for a commodity which if not identical is not dissimilar.

. . . . .

The very nature of a paid companionship establishes its specific rules, and assigns definite roles and powers to its two members. Nevertheless it would be wrong to assume that joys and frictions that arise in a more ordinary relationship are necessarily absent from one based on a financial agreement.

The man who marries a woman for her dowry, the man who keeps a mistress, the woman who marries a man for his title or position—are not their companionships, too, regulated by somewhat similar agreements, even though other factors enter

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

into them as well? In a paid relationship, too, a break is bound to occur sooner or later if both sides do not exercise a certain amount of patience, tact, self-control and tolerance.

The moralist and the highbrow who scoff at those who have to turn employer in order to secure a companion, have little justification for their superior attitude. More understanding and charity on their part would be more appropriate. And we ought to rejoice that at least some of the people, whose circumstances—inner or external—make it impossible for them to find a permanent mate or friend, are in a position to 'buy' a companion as, in fact, most of us are doing, without admitting it with equal bluntness. True, it is not the 'real thing'. But when for some reason or another the best is unprocurable, even the second best has its values.

## CHAPTER IV

# INFERIORITY

### I

## THE AUTOCRAT WITH THE INFERIORITY COMPLEX

There was really nothing wrong with our adjutant, he was a pleasant enough fellow, never denied you his assistance—a weekend pass, a railway warrant, petrol coupons—was quite witty, though in a biting sort of way that suggested a defective sense of humour, was no fool, and quite as efficient as most of the under-trained adjutants in the early days of the war. In spite of his many accomplishments, he was the least popular member of the Mess. It did not take me long to find out the reasons; and he, on his part, kept on providing new illustrations of them.

The adjutant was as touchy as the proverbial Chinese princess. He would never forgive you if you tried to settle anything coming within his jurisdiction in some other, possibly simpler, way; if, for instance, you applied for an official signature to the Duty Officer, or the C.O., rather than to him. Woe unto you if you forgot his rank (merely that of an acting Flight Lieutenant) or the fact that he was *the* adjutant. If there was anyone who stood on his dignity and departmental exclusiveness, and enjoyed bossing others, it was he. No wonder that his miscellaneous virtues were as a thimbleful when compared with the bucketful of his failings. Departmental rights, rank, prerogatives—these were the deities on whose altar he unhesitatingly sacrificed any and all of his more attractive traits.

During the war, failings, such as these of our adjutant, were not rare in the forces, nor in fact in any of the countless new Government departments, in which people not used to exercising

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

power, nor to bearing serious responsibilities, were suddenly placed in positions of authority.

. . . . .

What is it that turns an otherwise inoffensive, possibly kindly and likeable person into an insufferable, rank-and-power-obsessed autocrat?

On several occasions I found myself spending a whole night with the adjutant, both of us being detailed for cipher duties. Since on such informal occasions he was talkative, and evidently had few opportunities to discuss his past—something he was obviously itching to do—I soon obtained a fairly accurate picture of his early home life.

He was the third of the four children of a schoolmaster in Essex. The father was a domineering bully; his wife a doting mother who did her best to give the children the love that the father either denied them, or was unable to demonstrate. The third boy was the one whom she spoiled most; for his two elder brothers, too, domineered over and bullied him. Even when he was in his teens, his mother still treated him as though he were a baby, and made most decisions for him.

The picture of his childhood provides an example so simple as to be almost classical: a boy bullied by his father and his brothers, hardly ever daring to raise his voice or to impose his individuality; a loving mother trying to take away all the responsibilities from the boy. The result? A thwarted will-power and strong inferiority complex, with a profound longing for self-assertion; a grudge against authority, with an even more potent longing to 'pay back' his father and brothers for all the humiliations suffered in youth. A clerkship in a provincial office offered no opportunities for satisfying that longing. At the outbreak of war, his one ambition was to become an officer. (In a weak moment he confessed to me that one of the greatest thrills in his life was when for the first time he found himself addressed as 'Sir' by a subordinate.) He soon got a commission and instinctively gravitated towards the job of an adjutant where there were the greatest opportunities for asserting his authority, taking decisions, and bullying others. At last he could have his revenge.

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### II

#### THE BRAGGART

Then there is the first cousin to our adjutant. We all have met him somewhere or other: most probably he is a good sport, rather keener and more ambitious than the average type, and efficient. He could really be very likeable . . . if only he would not brag, or pick an argument; or be dogmatic and talk louder than anyone else, as if strength of voice added reason to his arguments; in short, if only he could stop implying that he is superior to everyone else. You must give him his due: he has the gift of the gab, and sometimes you catch yourself being almost convinced by him. As a rule, however, women appear to fall more easily for his 'stuff' than men do, and are impressed by accounts of experiences from which he usually emerges as a hero. Yet even men may find themselves entertained and deceived by him—at any rate the first time they meet him. On closer acquaintance, his bragging destroys whatever liking they may have felt for him at first.

It hardly improves human relations if one partner always implies that he is braver, wiser, or in any other way superior to all others. If his superiority is real, it will instinctively be acknowledged by them. And, instead of making them feel inferior, it will be an inspiration to them. Otherwise, however, human relations, to be satisfactory, must be built on the assumption that we are all equals.

It is easy enough to condemn the braggart, but not quite so easy to find out what has made him what he is. For at heart he may possibly be quite sincere, and may not really mean to dwell so insistently on his superior merits. But some inner devil seems to force him to adopt a manner that in his better moments he may despise quite as much as do those who are its victims.

If he is clever, he brags with a studied modesty (which is by no means a contradiction in terms): he neither dots the 'i's nor crosses the 't's, but leaves it to yourself to deduce how brave or clever he must have been to perform this or to achieve that. This technique of understatement is apt to be even more

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

irritating to the listeners than are the more flagrant terms of bragging.<sup>1</sup> For they feel that their intelligence is being insulted, their credulity taken for granted.

Like his cousin, the autocrat with an inferiority complex, the braggart was very common during the war. You found him in barracks and ships, in Home Guard centres, on aerodromes. But he is equally common in factory and office, in English pub and Italian café, in American railway carriage, or among the Swiss, the Poles, and even the wise Chinese. He represents a type that is confined to no country or class, even though he is more commonly male than female.

In nine out of ten cases we find that the braggart is a man who is not quite certain of himself. He seeks the illusion of self-certainty in trying to impress others. In their reactions he is hoping to find what his knowledge and experiences of himself deny him. He needs daily, or hourly, reassurance and bolstering-up.

There are many reasons why a man should suffer from a sense of inner uncertainty to the extent of seeking help in a method that at heart he may possibly despise. He may be acutely conscious of how short he falls of his ideals and ambitions. Or he may have realised his own limitations, and yet be reluctant to accept them. He may be doubting his own beliefs and hoping to strengthen them by dogmatism and over-emphasis. He may be lacking in real knowledge and trying to deceive others by inflating it. Or he may be conscious of some inherent weakness in himself, or of some past action of which he feels ashamed (in fact of the skeleton in the cupboard). His bragging enables him, if not actually to destroy, at any rate to hide or silence it.

A man with a firm belief in whatever philosophy he may abide by, feels no need to seek its confirmation by convincing others of its value. He will be pleased if they share his philosophy; but, if they don't, the strength of his own belief in it will not suffer. He may be of a dogmatic frame of mind; but

<sup>1</sup> A not dissimilar type is represented by people who constantly belittle their achievements, standing, looks, etc., merely to provoke contradiction. Theirs might be called 'inverted' bragging.

## INFERIORITY

while arguing, will hardly assume the tone of false authority with which the braggart tries to hide his inner uncertainty.

Then again a man who accepts his shortcomings—intellectual, financial, social, or of any other nature, in the knowledge that he is unable to expand them beyond a certain limit—is hardly likely to mind if others see him as he really is. It will never occur to him to try to cut a more impressive figure than his true one. Only a man too foolish or too small to accept unfavourable reality deceives himself that he can destroy it by raising his voice.

Of course, it does not follow that whenever a man speaks dogmatically or argues in an unnecessarily loud voice he is disguising a hidden weakness, or trying to run away from some inner fear. More often than not, however, it means precisely that. Those who are strong, wise, mentally self-assured, have nothing to gain from bluff and self-aggrandisement.

Unfortunately, not many people feel completely secure in their faith or knowledge, and so, at times, even those who have no skeletons to hide and no wish to impress the world, forsake their innate modesty, and argue more loudly and vehemently than is their wont. At such moments we are entitled to suspect that some weak spot in their armour has been revealed, and that the poor devils, by dint of rapid and inflated talk, are merely trying to distract our attention from it.

But his manner is not the disease from which the boaster suffers; it is merely its symptom, and there is little point in 'curing' a symptom. Empirical methods are called for. His manner cannot change until he has removed the causes that have led to it, by becoming more secure in whatever faith or views he holds; by acknowledging his limitations and not striving for what is beyond his means; and, above all, by achieving a greater sincerity, which is another word for honesty. Of course the great difficulty of his position is that before deciding not to strive for what is beyond his means, he must already have some humility. And before he can attain humility, he must be consciously acknowledging (not just sub-consciously suspecting) that all is not as he would wish it to be. If he accomplishes this, he may become an asset in human relations, instead of being a pest.



## CHAPTER V

### HABIT

#### I

#### THE METHOD OF MR. A.

As Mr. A. stepped from the train and made his way towards the station exit, his face hardened, as it always did on that occasion. Not that Mr. A. was aware of this, even though conscious of the sinking feeling that crept into him whenever he was on his way home.

Perhaps he should have stopped in town and spent the evening with the Turners. Or he might have had a bite somewhere and gone to the pictures, and finished off with a couple of pints at the Green Dragon. Phyllis would not have reproached him. She would merely have said, 'You might have let me know you wouldn't be in for dinner', or 'I hope you've had a nice time', which would have been worse, much worse. She would have tried to sound cheerful, but there would be a martyr's look in her eyes.

How he hated this daily walk from the station to 'Mon Bijou' past the same row of shops—the butcher's, the wireless shop, Woolworth's, the chemist's, the greengrocer's; past the petrol station; alongside that awful long hoarding with most of its posters peeling off the rotting wood; round the corner to the right, where the residential district began, with its red brick villas, half-hidden behind funereal laurels and climbing ivy. He knew every inch of that walk so thoroughly that he could have walked the whole distance blindfold.

But nothing depressed him more than the sight of 'Mon Bijou': laurels, of course, and red brick, but with a pretentious porch thrown in, and made worse by the Virginia creeper that gave it a look of sinister voluptuousness. For more than twenty years he had been returning on five evenings each week to that

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red-brick prison. Was it possible that he could ever have considered it attractive?

Whenever Mr. A.'s thoughts reached back to that distant past, he felt embarrassed. 'Mon Bijou' had been Phyllis's idea, and it was her money that had provided it, with its five bedrooms, the bathroom lined with mauve tiles, the upright satinwood piano in the drawing-room, the cook, the housemaid. Without Phyllis's money and the safe job that Mr. A. had found in her father's business, there might not have been enough for even a bungalow. But would not a bungalow have been a thousand times more attractive than 'Mon Bijou' with its regular hours and regular habits, with each of its little ornaments eternally and precisely in the same place? With never a change, never a breath of fresh air, unless you could count those short, uninspired summer holidays.

Mr. A. sighed when he let himself through the front door into the hall. He deposited his hat and umbrella on the stand purchased for that purpose some twenty years earlier: it was a Japanese contraption of bamboo, with shining brass hooks and fittings. He hated the thing, he hated the Japs, he hated having Oriental muck cluttering up an English home. So he forced himself not to look through the open door leading to the dining-room, where his eyes would have met a fat porcelain Buddha squatting on a carved ebony table in the corner.

Mechanically Mr. A. went up the staircase, counting the steps to himself: eleven to the landing, two paces across the landing, four more steps leading to the first-floor passage. Not once in all those years had he missed counting the steps, as though he were hoping that one day they might by some miracle change their number. But, like everything else, they always remained the same, eleven and four, eleven and four. . . .

To relieve his mind, Mr. A. let his thoughts wander to his office. He liked his office and his work. He was popular with his colleagues, and knew that whenever he allowed himself to spend an evening with friends in town he was considered good company. It was only 'Mon Bijou' and the oppressive monotony of its routine that brought out what was least likeable in him. It was its everlasting sameness that floored him.

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

Yet, damn it all! he wasn't an old man by any means. He had a right to expect novelty and adventure from life. What else was life for? But adventure . . . with Phyllis? Mr. A. tried to laugh sardonically, but decided against that particular manifestation, and went to wash his hands, change his coat, and put on his slippers. He took a long time over these affairs, as if to delay the moment of meeting Mrs. A.

. . . . .

When Mr. A. finally got to the sitting-room he found his wife in her usual sofa corner darning his socks. Yesterday it had been his shirts that she had been mending, the day before a pair of his pyjamas, the day before. . . . Always the same. Mr. A.'s former gloom gave place to irritability: he knew that there was not the slightest justification for feeling irritated; he should in fact have felt grateful. After all, it was *his* socks she was darning. But his feelings spoke louder than the voice of his reason, and when he muttered 'Hullo', there was little warmth in his voice.

'Good evening, darling,' Mrs. A. replied, laying down her work. (Why must she always call him 'darling', a man in his fifties, father of two grown-up children? It was ridiculous.) 'I hope you've had a good day,' she added cheerfully. Since Mr. A. knew that his wife did *not* expect a reply—she never did—he crossed the room silently and switched on the wireless.

Not that the noise would prevent his wife from chattering! He could foretell almost every bit of information she would pass on to him, and the exact words in which this would be done: she would paraphrase a letter from Alf or Pamela, the children, and give detailed commentaries on its contents—as though he couldn't read their letters for himself! She would enumerate shopping difficulties, mention a call from Miss Slight who played the organ in church . . . Well, hadn't he been right? Everything was as he had foreseen. So he let his wife do the talking, and merely filled the rare intervals in her flow with an occasional 'Ahem!' or 'Really'.

Presently, however, Mary the maid sounded the gong for dinner, which would inevitably comprise thick or clear soup,

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macaroni cheese or cottage pie (the weekly joint had been eaten up two days ago), prunes with substitute custard, or the remains of the jam tart that his mother-in-law sent them regularly each week. No, there would be no surprises at dinner either; and after each course Phyllis would say she hoped he had enjoyed it, and she was sorry that the growing food difficulties made it impossible for Cook to do better . . . As though Phyllis were the only one who had to put up with food difficulties! Yet whenever he dined with the Turners in London there would be something unexpected—calf's brains with capers, or eel in vinegar, a trifle, or mince pies. He loved eel and he loved mince pies; but Phyllis maintained that both gave her indigestion; and so at 'Mon Bijou' they never had either dish.

. . . . .

Though Mr. A. didn't feel much like talking, he did not wish to appear rude, and gave his wife brief answers. The thought passed through his mind that perhaps he was being unfair. Perhaps he was taking for granted things for which he really ought to show more appreciation. After all, poor Phyllis could not help being punctilious and dull. When, against her parents' wish, she had insisted upon marrying him, an impecunious young clerk with a fine physique, he had had every reason to congratulate himself on his good fortune. The greater the pity that she should have let herself go so completely.

As a young woman she had been more than pretty, and truth to tell, she hadn't entirely lost her looks. But even caviare lost its flavour if you had to eat it day after day. Why couldn't she realize that there was more in life than 'Mon Bijou' with its regular meals, its furniture always in the same place, the weekly letters from the children! Would she never see that life was change, novelty, adventure? No, it was no use hoping that she could ever be different from what she was. It was just his rotten luck to have to spend all his life a slave to habit and routine. Nothing aged a man so rapidly, so shamefully squandered what was best in him.

Yet at one time he had been in love with his wife. And there had been excitement when Alf was born, and then Pamela,

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when these made their first attempts at walking, or tried out their first word. But gradually he saw less and less of them: Phyllis had insisted that they should be sent to boarding-schools; they made their own friends and finally gained their own independence.

Lucky brats! Only Phyllis's life, and his with it, had fallen dismally into a groove of routine and habit.

Mr. A. was so much preoccupied with his thoughts that he paid no attention whatever to his wife. Their usual summer holiday by the sea had been completely ruined by bad weather, but she had been saving up for some time, and, if he could get his fortnight soon from his office, they might have a change and go to Scotland, which they had not visited since their honeymoon. She explained all this at length.

Mr. A. heard the sound of her voice but he heard it only vaguely, with faint annoyance, as though it were the dripping of a tap. He did not hear her when she repeated her question about his fortnight. He did not even notice that her eyes were filling with tears.

## II

### THE METHOD OF MR. B.

The sound of running water formed a pleasantly melodious background to Mr. B.'s dissolving dreams. After a brief effort he opened his eyes. Next door Muriel was running her bath. Mr. B. smiled. For over twenty-five years it was always Muriel who had her bath first, giving him an opportunity for adding a delightful quarter of an hour to his morning's doze in bed.

Without turning his head, Mr. B. reached out for his cup of tea on the bedside table. Before having her bath, Muriel always prepared their early tea and brought it on a tray. Mr. B. enjoyed that cup of tea almost more than his breakfast. Was there not something very comforting in the knowledge that each morning there would be a cup of tea waiting for him; that there was a companion always ready at hand to see to his well-understood needs?

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The quarter of an hour passed like a minute, and presently Mr. B. again heard the water running in the bathroom. This would be his own bath. In a few seconds Muriel would come in through the bathroom door, wearing her mauve dressing-gown—she must have had it for some fifteen years now—and say, 'Hope you've had a good night, Charles.' Always the same words, accompanied by the identical gesture as she stretched out her arm towards the dressing-table to pick up the brush and begin brushing her hair. How well he knew that gesture, and how deeply he loved it. It was precisely the same gesture that he remembered so well in the young girl who had only just become his bride. How wonderful it was to know every gesture, every word, nay, the very thoughts of another human being. You were never alone in life, never confronted with the unknown, the unexpected. Foolish, after twenty-seven years, to be still in love with one's wife. Yet was it so foolish? Mr. B. asked himself as he stepped into his bath.

Muriel certainly was not what you might call a beauty, never had been. But then why should she be? She wasn't an actress or a mannequin, and life with a beautiful woman wouldn't be easy all the time. Never in all these long years had he had the slightest reason to feel jealous. Yet was any woman's smile sweeter? Little dimples would appear in her cheeks, and her eyes would light up as though you had switched on an electric bulb behind them. He smiled himself as he thought of it.

True, she was not even what you would call even-tempered, and often fell into 'moods'. At first he had fought against those moods of hers, and tried to cheer her when they threatened. But when his efforts failed, he grew moody on his own account and became morose. Fortunately, he soon learned that the only way to deal with Muriel's 'bad days' was to disregard them until she became her happy self again. That was the beauty of it: if you knew another person as intimately as he knew her, you could always react in the desired way and do the expected thing. Now, even when on a rare occasion an argument sprang up between them, he knew beforehand how to behave, and how it would end. Always he would let her have the last word, always.

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

In their earlier days he sometimes had to force himself to swallow his pride and self-esteem, and would feel affronted. But gradually he learned that it repaid him a hundred times not to try to get the better of her. For after he gave in, she became sweeter than ever, as if wishing to repay him for his generosity. In order to savour those precious moments the better, he would sometimes provoke an argument, and let her have her little victory. But you could do that sort of thing only with someone you knew as thoroughly as he knew Muriel—no good trying to play such tricks on people you didn't know intimately. He half suspected that Muriel saw through his strategy and knew when he deliberately tried to provoke her. But, bless her heart, in the end she always reacted in the desired way.

It was a great pity that she could not bear children. When they were first married, he eagerly hoped for a son. But it was not to be, and he comforted himself by reflecting that children were not everything, with all the worries, the uncertainties, the expense . . . Nevertheless, it would have been splendid. Yet you must not expect everything from life. A wife such as Muriel, and a contented life without upheavals, were more bounty than most men were privileged to call their own.

He couldn't pretend that Muriel was perfect. Who was? But her imperfections were as nothing compared with what was good in her. Knowing both faults and causes, he loved her the better for them. They brought variety into their relationship, they were in fact the salt without which even the best-cooked dish tastes insipid. No matter what anyone might say, he now had more reason to be in love with Muriel than he had had when they first married. In those far-off days there had been nothing to hold them together except their young love. How little she had known about him or he about her! Now their love was enriched by a thousand common experiences and memories, a veritable treasure house of knowledge of one another. Imagine any man wishing to break up his marriage, to start life afresh with a new mate: to begin all over again learning the thousand little details without which no love would be worth the name!

## HABIT

After his bath, Mr. B. went to the mirror to shave. To reach his safety razor in the little medicine chest above the basin, he had to put aside the bottle of fruit salts that his wife had just been using and that she always insisted upon placing on top of his razor. Every morning, he had to rearrange a few bottles and jars to tidy away the salts. At one time this annoyed him. But now he enjoyed this detail in his morning routine, for it gave him a vague feeling of superiority. Muriel, so tidy, so far above him in everything concerning their domestic life, nevertheless left a few loopholes through which his own virtues could assert themselves.

. . . . .

When Mr. B. reached the little parlour which also served as a dining-room, breakfast was already on the table. Just as he was settling down in his chair, his wife jumped up from hers. 'Do begin without me,' she cried and rushed into the nearby kitchen. Mr. B. chuckled to himself. Poor girl, what had she forgotten this time? It was one of their standing jokes that Muriel always forgot to bring some particular thing, a spoon, or the milk jug, or the bread knife. This time it was the tea strainer. But he must not blame her: she had quite enough to think of in the morning, as it was. In the past they had had a char coming in for a few hours during the morning. But in the last few years business had been bad, and Muriel had decided to dispense with help altogether. It wasn't perhaps quite fair to her—she wasn't getting any younger—but then what would she do all day long if she didn't have their little flat to look after? Anyhow it was much nicer to have no stranger about the place—made you feel cosier somehow, with no one to interfere with the established routine.

. . . . .

There was only one letter on the table; one with a penny stamp, probably a circular or some prospectus. It could wait till later, together with the paper which Mr. B. never opened until he had settled in his corner seat on the 8.57 train. Funny that some men liked to read their paper at breakfast, depriving themselves of the pleasure of a morning chat with their wives.



## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

Not that he and Muriel discussed anything of great importance. Still, who wanted to embark on a serious discussion at breakfast-time? There would be just their usual chit-chat about what she was going to do after lunch; and was it the day when the grocer came, or was it the laundry man; and did she want him to get her anything in town; and what was she going to write to her sister? He knew all her answers beforehand, but that was half the fun of their morning gossip. Nothing in life like knowing where you are.

Finally, Mr. B. got up to get his hat and umbrella. He then returned to the breakfast table. Muriel was just getting up from her chair, her head half raised towards him to receive his goodbye kiss. 'Bless you, darling,' Mr. B. would say, and in reply she would use the identical words that he must have heard on some ten thousand mornings in the past, 'Be good, Charles,' and then, with the usual laugh, he would join her in the occasional addendum, 'and if you can't be good, be careful'.

. . . . .

'Bless the old girl', Mr. B. said to himself on the way to the station. And already he was beginning to look forward to his return home in the evening. A thousand beloved little items and habits would be awaiting him there, and true companionship. How many of the men he knew could boast of a similar security and of the peace of mind that went with it?

Here, for the moment, we will leave Mr. and Mrs. B., a pair of rather trivial bores, you may opine. Perhaps our study of the mechanism of habit will throw light on Mr. A.'s discontent and the quiet happiness of Mr. B.

## III

### MECHANISM OF HABIT

Like most things in life, devotion to habit can have either good or bad results. In itself it is neither a virtue nor a vice, since its character depends entirely on whether we become its unthinking slaves, or realise exactly how and why we are involved.

## HABIT

One of the functions of habit is to minimize unnecessary effort, and to enable us to perform certain duties automatically. Automatism is not desirable in an activity whose nature demands reason and the conscious exercise of our will; but it is legitimate, even eminently desirable, where deliberation is uncalled for. If every time we pick up a book, walk up a staircase, or switch on a light, we were to deliberate on what we were doing, we should be wasting a great deal of energy and performing these repetitive actions less efficiently than would be the case if they were 'automatic'.

In human relations habit, like certain conventions, can prevent unnecessary friction, save time and energy, and, altogether, act as a kind of lubricant. It might also establish innumerable common links, foster intimacy, and enlarge our knowledge of one another. Advisedly we say 'can', for on the reverse side of our pretty picture we find habit as a deadener of our susceptibilities. For habit easily acts as soporific on mind and emotions. It makes us take for granted things that we should appreciate and feel grateful about. Thus in human relations habit is apt to make us dully indifferent when we should be lively and interested. And needless to say, in the realm of human relations, indifference implies retrogression.

Where relations have been debased to habit, we neither can give nor receive anything worth while. For once we take for granted every aspect of our intercourse with another person we find that the enchantment has fled. We no longer expect to make valuable discoveries, we no longer feel inclined to make any valuable contribution on our own account. The same holds good when we begin to take our work for granted, and perform it automatically and 'in accordance with habit': standards decline, development becomes impossible, and the above-mentioned retrogression is then inevitable.

How is it then that Mr. B. found in the habit-riddled pattern of his days a constant source of enrichment and happiness? Habit not only failed to deaden him but even made him more acutely conscious of the joy of living. The answer is not far to seek.

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

It was not habit as such that invigorated and enriched his married life, but the love he infused into it. Habit merely provided the material on which his love could work.

The only other thing that can save habit from turning into a meaningless automatism is deliberate effort. We can remind ourselves that there is a balance between what we derive from a given relationship and what we owe it in return, and in this way constantly revivify and strengthen it.

It is as if every human venture were governed by some secret law, according to which we start with a particular resolve, only to find after a time that our initial impulse has either been weakened or has changed its original direction. Instead of proceeding along the intended straight line, it follows a sort of hyperbola. (According to P. D. Ouspensky, the Russian thinker and author of *Tertium Organum*, there exists a relevant law that works with mathematical precision. If memory serves me right, he calls it the law of octaves. The mathematical progression of this law is precisely the same as that which governs the relationship between the different notes of a musical octave.) Only a repeated and conscious effort on our part—in the form of additional energy or reorientation—can restore the original direction and the clarity of aim of our venture.

In practical terms this means that we should never take it for granted that a given relationship will last for ever of its own accord; that its own impetus will enable it to run satisfactorily with no kind of intervention; or that we shall benefit from it without making deliberate efforts to repay for such benefits.

Since Mr. A. did all this and, moreover, was incapable of infusing love into habit, all the material advantages that he had over Mr. B., could not prevent the disintegration of his marriage.

## CHAPTER VI

### MIMICRY

#### I

#### THE CHAMELEON AT WORK

A man gets up in the morning and starts the day's routine. In his own home he can naturally let himself go. So he sings in his bath; appears in front of a lady—if 'only' his wife—without collar and tie, and, at breakfast, possibly, chooses to pour his tea into a saucer and to imbibe it to the accompaniment of loud hissing noises. If he happens to be in a bad mood, he may lose his temper and employ words that only an hour later he wouldn't even admit to knowing. Over his morning paper he may make a few comments—about foreign affairs, or the likely winner in the 3.30, or the rottenness of the Government—after all, what use is a wife at the breakfast table, if not to be the admiring recipient of her breadwinner's knowledge of the world? If there are children in the family, well, for a few moments he might show fatherly amiability, or in less amiable terms draw their attention to his high sense of duty, or some other exalted virtue of his that they might do well to emulate. But none of this will last very long, for soon he will be on his way to the office.

On the bus he would naturally not dream of singing, or parading his knowledge, or using strong language. Instead he wraps himself in the mantle of a slightly superior impersonality. And you would find it hard to guess whether he is married or not, whether he drinks his tea from a saucer or a cup, whether he has a fine home to return to, or can only just keep up appearances.

When he reaches his office building he drops the impersonal air and becomes the jovial patron, greeting the commissionaire with a friendly, 'Mornin' Simpkins, looks like another fine day'.

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

Within less than an hour he has already acted three or four different parts. But he would not dream of admitting that all the while he has been anything but his own invariable self.

Then the day's serious business begins, and the garb of personality is once again as strictly prescribed as are his black jacket and striped trousers. There is an imperceptible tautening of both his features and his body; the tone of his voice becomes a little less jovial; his entire personality assumes what he imagines to be an air of undemonstrative efficiency. He is, of course, quite unmindful of the new role into which he has slipped with such ease, for the changing-over process was unconscious and automatic. With his colleagues he may unbend a little, but with none of the abandon he recently displayed at home. For now the process is more deliberate. It will be even more studied when he deals with inferiors and superiors, since both groups require separate adjustments. While the boss may on occasion have said about him, 'I wish Smith were less servile', the typist and the errand boy call him haughty, and maintain that he 'gives himself airs'. It seems that no two people have the same view of him, for with every group he plays a different role.

Each visitor from outside naturally calls for a fresh adjustment on Mr. Smith's part. Some of them haven't paid their bills yet, and so he meets them with either a patronizing or a condescending air. But when the valued customer Sir Montagu Grabmore arrives, Mr. Smith is all smiles and compliments. From the alertness with which he offers the visitor a cigarette, and the way he wriggles in his chair and even permits himself an unexceptionable joke, you would almost say he was a Frenchman or an Italian.

By noon Mr. Smith will already have assumed a dozen different personalities, and by the time he retires to bed, several more will have been added to his collection. And even when just about to fall asleep at night, reviewing mentally the events of the day and murmuring to himself, 'You are not such a bad chap, John Smith', he slips into yet another new pose: the cosy one of benevolent self-approval.

# MIMICRY

## II

### WHY DO WE PLAY-ACT?

Does John Smith's predilection for constantly changing his mental costume suggest that he is insincere, or that he suffers from a congenital weakness for playacting? If it were so, ninety-nine per cent of humanity would find themselves convicted of the same range of faults.

In her maxims for nuns, St. Teresa of Avila gave the following advice: 'Fall in with the mood of the person to whom you are speaking. Be happy with those who are happy, and sad with those who are sad.'

Very few of us are fully able, or even willing, to share the mood of all those with whom we come in contact. But often in our human relations, we find that almost unthinkingly we are adapting our mood and manners. At its best, such mimicry denotes our desire to meet the other man half-way. It is a sign of our sensitiveness or sympathy, and our purpose is to be of service to the other man, even to the extent of identifying ourselves with him. Such identification often means a certain sacrifice of our own ego, and implies genuine altruism on our part. (We are not including in this 'act of identification' the play-acting of Mr. Smith and others when confronting their supposed inferiors with a personality reserved for that particular purpose. We return shortly to this theme.)

It is psychologically well-nigh impossible for the average person not to act differently towards different people: one may stimulate our mind, another our emotions; one may bring out our sense of assertiveness, another our inclination to submissiveness, and so forth. Some people awaken whatever sadistic strain may be within us; the appeal of others is to our innate masochism.

Perhaps it is time to justify our use of the word 'mimicry'. The chameleon, you may say, is not precisely a 'mimic', but rather a creature intelligently and rapidly adapting itself to changing circumstances. What, then, is being mimicked in the cases we are quoting? Is it not the 'ideal man for present

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

circumstances', a being evolved in the twinkling of an eye, and mimicked so long as his usefulness endures?

Unfortunately it is not only to serve altruistic purposes that we set our 'mimicry' in action. Far more often are we hoping to impress others, to cut a fine figure, to appear as strong, as charitable, as matey, as indifferent as the next man; and instinctively we throw ourselves into the new role demanded. Even when we do not go 'all out' in our effort, we yet pitch certain parts of our personality in a new key. If we assume that reticence would be effective, we become more reserved than we are normally. Commoner, however, is the tendency towards exaggeration: we speak rather more than we should, underline our points more emphatically, and, though we may not actually be lying, are not altogether averse to creating false impressions. The more emotional we are, the stronger 'mimicry' possesses us. Once we are in its grip, it easily runs away with us. We act as though we were slightly 'out of focus', and our behaviour does not correspond with what is most genuine in our nature. When a hardened liar or a bluffer exaggerates, there is no discrepancy between his words and his true nature. When the honest person, who normally would not dream of departing from truth, does the same, he is 'out of focus'. As soon as his opportunity for play-acting is over, he will realise how unworthy his behaviour has been, and feel ashamed; but the habitual liar will suffer no such remorse. For in his case his true nature has not been violated.

. . . . .

Thus the person we are aiming to 'be' is purely fictitious and may have little in common with any aspect of ourselves. Yet we are not always trying to act the role of what the witness would like us to be. Quite frequently we are acting the part of what *we ourselves* would like to be, often striving to perfect a character the germs of which are already in us. This seems to suggest that our 'mimicry' pursues other than cheap, external aims, such as the ambition to cut an impressive figure.

Often we play different roles, one after another, in the hope of finding our true selves. There comes a day when any man

## MIMICRY

realizes that he is full of contradictions, of good and bad, of lovable and contemptible. Yet why, he asks himself, need his nature embrace the undesirable as well as the desirable? Isn't it reasonable to suppose that one of his roles will prove to be the real himself? That in the process of discarding one for another, he is bound to find the one which is the truest reflection of his nature? Thinking thus, he adopts role after role, somewhat abashed to find himself at ease in so many.

Those who knew T. E. Lawrence intimately were convinced that his surprising changes of role were by no means attitudinizing—as his enemies would have it—but inevitable in his search for his true self. It was not through vanity that he took so vital an interest in each new portrait and photograph of himself. No, it was not vanity that made Aircraftsman Shaw lose himself in the study of his own features, as caught by this artist or that photographer. And it was not literary vanity that made him so hungry for the reactions of people whose judgment he valued. Again and again he was trying to come a little closer to the mystery of that puzzling personality who happened to have his body, his character and the various names behind which he tried to hide both.

It is interesting to observe that, except for extreme cases, none of the different parts we play is completely false to our nature. Either separately or together, they express something that is within ourselves. As a rule, even an actor on the stage prefers those parts that are 'congenial' to him. This means that the character he feels most fitted to portray is one that to some extent has certain traits in common with himself. These may be deeply hidden, and he need not necessarily be conscious of them. But instinctively he tries to express them through a character that is *en rapport*.

## III

### WOMEN'S MAKE-UP

Even though not always acknowledged as such, one of the most common forms of human 'mimicry' is the one represented by women's make-up. Why do women use cosmetics? Either



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to improve their true looks, and to hide blemishes imprinted by Nature or by time, or, as happens even more frequently, to hide their true personality behind an assumed one. The red splash across the lips is the easiest method for achieving any of those aims. For quite instinctively women know that the mouth is more revealing than any other part of the face, in spite of all the poetical assurances that the eyes are the 'windows of the soul'.

By narrowing or broadening her lips, by changing their corners and contour, a woman can make herself appear either more voluptuous or more modest, more womanly or more harsh, more domineering or more submissive than she really is. By creating with her lipstick a pair of lips different from those given her by Nature, she easily provides herself with a mask behind which she can hide her reactions to the particular man for whose sake she has devised her camouflage, or the particular woman whose goose she is hoping to cook.

Neither a woman who is absolutely certain of holding her man, nor one equally certain of herself and of her innate qualities, is likely to use make-up for purposes of disguise or camouflage. Only because they are not quite certain of themselves or of being completely 'in focus', do most women use make-up to help them to assume a different personality, one, moreover, which they believe to come nearest to their ideal. Naturally, these observations do not apply to women whose use of make-up has no such ends. For no particular virtue resides in pale lips, and, however well-balanced and self-assured a woman, she will gain little from a shiny nose and rough, neglected skin.

Eleanore Duse, possibly the greatest actress of the present century and the most sincere woman that ever graced the stage, consistently refused to apply make-up even behind the foot-lights. Those who had the privilege of seeing her know that even in that pallid nakedness of her features she was infinitely more expressive and more moving than most actresses who use make-up to suggest something of the portrayed character.

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### IV

#### UNITY IN SIMPLICITY

So we may so far agree that most of us spend a great deal of our time and effort in trying to express either an idealized notion of ourselves or a wishdream. (As a rule the two are almost identical.) Only very few people limit themselves exclusively to expressing what is rooted in their innermost nature. These are the people of whom we rightly say that they have 'found' themselves. Once a man has found himself, he no longer persists in slipping into different personalities; having found himself, he is united within himself, and therefore constant.

What makes for such inner unity and constancy? Often it is faith. For a faith strongly held provides a solid foundation on which to stand, and gives a meaning to everything that is a puzzle to the faithless, and replaces the innumerable shifting aims by a clear and abiding purpose. It would be wrong to assume that constancy born of faith (and the inner tranquillity that goes with it) is a privilege reserved exclusively for saints and mystics. We find it among unknown, 'undistinguished' people in every walk of life. (Dostoyevski's Alyosha Karamazow is one of their best-known representatives in literature.)

Inner constancy can also be the fruit of a self-sufficiency that comes from simplicity. The horizon of a man graced by such qualities may not be a very wide one, but it will always remain the same, and for everything encompassed by it he will have his own simple answers. We often find such simplicity among men who live with nature rather than with their fellow-humans, among shepherds, mountaineers, fisherfolk, and sailors. The seasons, the sun and the clouds, germination and decay in plant life, birth and death among the beasts, the portents of the skies or the sea—these, and the laws that govern them, provide such men with a secure knowledge and a steady directive for their conduct. However circumscribed their knowledge, it remains constant throughout their lives and makes for a sense of inner security. The more 'natural' and permanent the

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laws that a man obeys, the more uniform and constant is his being.

Neither faith nor simplicity is the birth-right of any particular class. But whether the man who is entirely 'in focus' be country yokel, blacksmith, doctor or city clerk, he will be the same towards whomever he meets: his friends or strangers, his employer or the village policeman. It will never enter his mind that the pedlar who comes to offer him a pair of shoe laces should be treated differently from Sir Al Mighty, the lord of the manor. He knows that social and other differences separate the two, and might possibly adjust his language and his topics of conversation to suit his company, but in his innermost attitude he will remain the same, showing neither servility towards the one, nor haughtiness towards the other.

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We find a similar simplicity in children who have not yet had time to be anything but themselves. Thus, as a rule, they meet king and beggar with the same curiosity, remaining their own true selves whatever the nature of the encounter.

So it is hardly accidental that many great men whose unity of purpose has given them an exceptional unity of character, have something childlike about them. How refreshing and impressive such a simplicity is, compared with the fussiness and pretentiousness of people who are going out of their way to impress us!

At this stage the reader may be wondering whether simplicity is not inimical to versatility, adding: 'Truly great men are usually very versatile. Look at Leonardo, Goethe; at Albert Einstein, who is not only a great mathematician but also something of a philosopher and musician.'

The answer is not hard to come by: for true versatility is quite different from the cleverness of the uncreative type.

Creative versatility, such as we find in certain great men, can only come from a person exceptionally united and concentrated within himself. Otherwise no inner richness is to be created. 'Many-facedness', or uncreative versatility, is the outward sign of an attempt to replace the lack of an inner treasure

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by a wardrobe full of fancy dresses. Leonardo da Vinci was equally curious, grave, tolerant, observant in his relations with people and in his innumerable occupations. A dying horse, a crawling lizard, a royal pageant, or a human face, were all of greater interest to him than his own reactions to them. Similarly it was more important to him to understand than to impress another person with his understanding. His versatility was not an artistic or intellectual accomplishment, but the expression of a supreme curiosity for the divine Why and How behind all phenomena. So preoccupied was he with that task that he did not need to bother about what impression he made on others, and could afford to be the same whether in the presence of popes, soldiers, kings, artisans, shopkeepers, fellow-artists, or ladies of the court.

The great and simple man is indifferent to the world's opinion of him because he is self-sufficient; not in the manner of the egotist or the recluse—both, explicitly or implicitly, considering themselves better than others; but because of his inner wealth that renews itself constantly through his interest in the world. Albert Einstein has never given up either his simplicity or his intense curiosity. Even the smallest manifestations of life have not ceased to rouse his interest. One day, while having tea with some friends, he suddenly asked, 'Why do the tea leaves go to the centre of the whirl when you stir your tea with a teaspoon?' The investigation of such phenomena appears to him infinitely more worthwhile than the pursuit of personal fame or wealth.

The lover is another individual who can afford to dispense with mimicry. For him there is nothing to be gained from trying to be someone he is not. Instinctively he tries to put into his love everything that is truest within him. To attempt being someone else would mean disloyalty not only to himself but also to the beloved. And there is nothing for which the true lover feels greater contempt than disloyalty, which poisons the very roots of the emotions on which he thrives, the emotions from which his life derives its deepest meaning. Moreover, his love illumines for him everything he touches, and this widespread illumination helps to unify his vision and to create unity in himself.

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It would, of course, be vain to attempt to effect an inner unity by copying the lover, the saint, or the simpleton. Such imitation 'simplicity' would be but another new garb, yet another pose.

An actor who is also a great artist can make us believe in the simplicity, nobility or saintliness of the character he impersonates. But we who are not great actors cannot create even a convincing *illusion* of something that does not permeate our entire being. John Smith may deceive himself that his children accept him as the fount of morality and wisdom that he pretends to be; but sooner or later they will find what is behind that impressive façade. And so will his colleagues at the office. But when he is somehow jolted into genuine self-expression, feels least tempted to 'act', and gives evidence of what is really in him, whether it be his efficiency, his joviality, or even his vanity or his bullying—then they instinctively feel that he is 'himself', and call him sincere.

There are no shortcuts to developing the unified personality that would permit us always to be the same, and to forget how much we wish to impress others. Even if there were, they would not be the same for two people. But at least we know what features will be common to those who have succeeded. All such men will be sincere, which is only another way of saying that they will be honest with themselves; they will actively acknowledge that life and the world through which it surges are more important than themselves; they will be guided by an aim greater than that of feeding their own egos.

## CHAPTER VII

### SHADOWS

#### I

#### EVOCATIVE ASSOCIATIONS

You walk into a room, an ordinary room with nothing exceptional about it, and all of a sudden you find yourself transported into a day in the distant past: the sun is dappling the grass with dancing gold, there is laughter in the air and happiness within you. You feel a flush on your cheeks, and you inhale deeply, as if with the inflowing air you could breathe in the contentment of that distant day in June. Then you shake yourself back to reality, and realize that the overwhelmingly evocative fragrance of the June day came from a basket of strawberries on the table. You had not expected to see them there, and had not enjoyed their scent for a long time. Nothing but the magic chemistry of that odour has unlocked a bolted door within your memory, and conjured up a picture that put you into your sudden state of happiness. The sudden perfume of the fruit (how you always delighted in it, especially on that particular day in the past!) brought up from your subconscious memories that for a few brief seconds proved more powerful than the real world about you. Because your subconscious memory associated the happiness of that distant day with the fragrance of strawberries it was their evocative potency that had transported you.

For the next hour you feel as though rejuvenated. You meet others with a smile, and there may be in your voice a tenderness that your friends had not heard for a long time.

. . . . .

This evocative power of smells, and their consequent influence upon our moods, can be extremely strong. It may be the smell of sour milk or of old books, of Oriental bazaars or of

## HUMAN, ALL TOO HUMAN

the wet pavements in the Champs-Élysées, of burnt leaves, evening mist, the harness of horses. From childhood to death we walk through millions of different smells, and each one of them may at a particular moment wrench us out of the present and transplant us into a distant country and even more distant past. It can suddenly bring to life people long forgotten, or dead, and, by its power to alter the mood of the moment, affect our relations with others.

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Naturally not smells alone but any sensory impressions can stir from the past associations that will affect our behaviour in the present. It may be a certain colour, a tune, the timbre of a voice, a horse's clip clap over cobbles, a ship's siren, a piece of clothing, or a toy; it may be the bend in a country lane, or mist rising from a field. Historical or literary associations can affect us similarly: a visit to a battlefield, or to the old home of an author whose books have meant much to us at a decisive time in our life.

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Why should so transient a thing as a fleeting sensory impression have such power at certain moments to influence us more profoundly than something far more concrete, something of which we are fully conscious, such as the person we are talking to or the work we are doing?

It is precisely because those impressions can range over the vast repository of our subconscious that they influence us so strongly. The reaction they provoke in us is not a new one, but has been made fertile by a wealth of earlier experiences. Those experiences may have meant a great deal to us at the time they took place, and have helped to shape our character during the intervening years. Thus the forgotten hoards which they suddenly bring to life are precisely those that we value most, or are most afraid of. If they were less important to us, we should not be so stirred when the evocative stimulus suddenly uncovers them and brings them to the surface from the vaults of the subconscious.

## SHADOWS

### II

#### MOODS

Possibly not quite as subtle in their inner mechanism as evocative associations but equally important in their effects, are our moods. Moods may be either causes or effects.

There are, to begin with, the very common moods whose causes are self-evident: the feelings of irritability and unsociableness on getting up in the morning; the glowing benevolence and wellbeing that follow a good meal, when the satisfied human animal cherishes company and is ready to forgive even his enemies. After a swim on a sunny day we feel younger than our years, and could tackle almost anything. After a night of insomnia all prospects look dark, and it costs us quite an effort not to meet our fellows with a feeling of reproach and even hatred.

There are innumerable other moods caused by our physical or mental condition, or by such plain 'facts' as the weather, or the company in which we happen to be; by our surroundings, our occupation, and so on. Yet however strong the particular mood may be, anything might suddenly transform it. For instance, the roar of an electric drill in the road can turn our amiability into ill-temper. On the other hand, gloom or despondency may be banished by the twittering of a bird or the gay song of the girl next door.

The German poet Schiller always kept apples about his room, for without their smell his creative muse would not enter into him. Balzac forced the visit of his muse by putting himself into the right mood with innumerable cups of strong coffee. The odour of boiling cabbage fills some people with deepest melancholy, while the smell of fried onions may exhilarate them. . . .

It may seem silly that human relations, which are bound to suffer from our individual moods, should be at the mercy of a couple of apples or a pot of cabbage! Yet few of us are immune from such accidental influences. Fortunately the problem imposed by them is not difficult to solve, for as their origins are



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easy to trace, and there is nothing mysterious about the link between these odd influences and our reactions to them, it is within our power to modify the latter. As a rule we can find the means for overcoming our unfavourable reaction simply by reminding ourselves of the given facts of the situation.

This is a commonplace of curative psychology.

There exist, however, innumerable cases in which such overcoming is extremely difficult to achieve. Our negative reaction may be due neither to the innate unpleasantness of the cause, such as a bad smell or an irritating noise, nor to traceable associations, but to something deeper. We may be suffering from some 'kink' in our make-up, or from what psychoanalysis calls a 'complex'. Whereas in the latter case the origins will be psychological, in the former they can be biological or physiological as well. In either case we will be unaware of them. When they send out their warning note from the dungeons of our subconscious we hear merely their sound, but know not whence it came. We are, of course, unable to establish the link between cause and effect, and thus neither our willpower nor our reason will find much scope. Such cases as these are perhaps amenable only to the ministrations of psychologist or psychoanalyst.

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But there also exist moods for which neither our own make-up nor any outside agents, such as sensory stimuli or environmental factors, can be held responsible. Without any apparent cause we may be feeling irritable, peevish, melancholy or anxious. As a result, we give curt replies, become argumentative or sarcastic, make tactless observations, or hurt people of whom we are fond.

Usually our moodiness is the result of some hidden grudge of which we may be conscious, without realizing that it affects our moods. The best way to rid oneself of a grudge against another person is to 'talk it out' with that person. Otherwise we may easily develop the habits of self-pity and 'silent monologues'. Our ill moods thrive exceedingly on such bitter soliloquies. Only a firm effort to put a stop to them will enable

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us to rid ourselves of the moodiness at the back of them. (More about this in the chapter on 'Misunderstandings'.)

The chief danger of all 'unaccountable' ill moods is that we easily let them take possession of us, and then act automatically at their bidding, as though they were an extraneous power. Only by giving ourselves a conscious inner jolt can we raise our behaviour from its automatic state to the level of consciousness. And only then can reason take control. Though reason cannot always eliminate the causes of our moods, it can, at least, show us the futility of reacting to them so unpleasingly. Becoming conscious of automatic reactions, and exposing them to the light of reason, is usually half the battle.

## CHAPTER VIII

### DREAMS

#### I

#### 'REALITY' OF DREAMS

Can dreams live on when the dreamers have long since been dead? One student of dreams, at least, seems to believe they can. In a broadcast (Sept. 1947) he described experiences in surroundings of an old Greek temple dedicated to the god Aesculapius, the patron of medicine. Now, as the speaker, Mr. Laurence Durrell, expounded, 'when the great cult of Aesculapius arose, dreams played a great part in the technique of healing . . . those who were sick travelled to one of the many temples where they entered a special building and spent the first night in incubation'. The suppliant 'slept in the special dormitory, and during his sleep the god appeared, and either healed him outright or prescribed a course of treatment for him to follow'. Evidently, the ancient Greeks anticipated Dr. Freud by more than two thousand years. For it is obvious that dreams provided for the temple priests a sort of diagnosis upon which they based their treatment.

But what is more startling in Mr. Durrell's experiences is his discovery that even in our own days people who lived, or merely slept, in the vicinity of the temple, had strange dreams. They dreamed more often and more vividly than they did normally. And usually their dreams were in some way related to the god Aesculapius. The dreamers were neither uneducated and possibly superstitious natives, nor people aware of the traditions associated with the temple. Mr. Durrell mentions two British Tommies, 'red-faced Yorkshiremen', who knew nothing at all about the history or the meaning of the temple. They had spent some time nearby, clearing up some German and Italian ammunition. These two unimaginative representatives of British

## DREAMS

common-sense admitted that when they had slept within the temple precincts they had experienced disturbed nights punctuated with nightmares. 'Is it possible,' Mr. Durrell asks, 'that dreams do not disappear? That long after we are dead our dreams remain behind us? . . . Had Charlie, the red-faced, unimaginative British soldier, somehow made contact with the ancient Greeks by letting their dreams invade his sleeping mind?'

Even the brief summary of the experiences narrated by Mr. Durrell indicates that humans have always been strongly influenced by what is more or less the *terra incognita* of dreams. The mystery of dreams and of their importance in human relations, but also in the possible delineation of both the past and the future, has always fascinated mankind. Practically every Oriental country in pre-Christian days devoted much study to dreams; we find their importance reflected in the stories of the Bible and in Roman history; in the Middle Ages as well as in our own times. Often they have given rise to crude superstitions; even more often they have influenced conduct; and always they were used to interpret events that reason by itself could not fathom.

Even if in the age of scientific rationalism psycho-analysis had not revealed to us the intimate links between dreams and reality, we should still be unjustified in dismissing the more ancient dream-beliefs as mere superstitions.

For belief in the significance of dreams is deeply inbred in the human soul, as though dreams manifested something more fundamental than reason can explain or argument destroy.

Psychoanalysis has lifted one corner of the cloak of mystery enshrouding the significance of dreams. But it limits itself to that particular corner or, rather, confines its researches to one somewhat narrow interpretation of its findings. Yet it would offend against the universality of life to limit dream interpretation to that narrow area that psychoanalysis defines by the vague term of 'the subconscious', and which it fills merely with the workings of our sex nature and our suppressed fears and desires.

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Both our consciousness and subconsciousness are circumscribed by what our mind and our senses can perceive. For, 'scientifically' speaking, there are no other instruments of perception at our disposal. Yet if man is a spiritual (and not only a rational) being, he obviously is not hemmed in by boundaries imposed by his reason and senses, that is to say, by instruments of cognition governed by the laws of time and space or, to put it differently, by those of 'natural man'. As a spiritual being he has access to a domain not subservient to those laws.

During sleep he steps out from within the narrow compass of a world governed by time and space, and finds himself in a far wider universe in which neither of these has any reality; or, rather, in which both have a different and less restricted kind of reality. The planets and the nether world, minerals and plants, history of the past and history of the future, life and death and all their ramifications, are open to his gaze. The material is no longer separated from the non-material: both have a non-substantial or, rather, transparent, yet eminently convincing reality. No longer is there any separation between the different dimensions, or any difficulty in overleaping all known dimensions.

The unity within our dream-world—and it is a unity—is inevitable: for it is a purely spiritual world, and not merely a 'rational' one.<sup>1</sup> This means that we experience in it the spiritual *habitus* of the impressions, knowledge, fears and hopes, garnered during our waking life, of which they form the crude phenomenological material.

Because the dream-world is a spiritual one and not trammelled by the ignorance, limitations, and accidents with which we wage a continuous battle in the day-world, it often appears

<sup>1</sup> The term spiritual world must not be identified with abstract or ideal world. It is spiritual, no matter whether the dreamer himself is spiritual-minded or a rank materialist. The very fact that he is human denotes that he is both matter *and spirit*. Whatever the subject of his dreams, these bring him a spiritual (and not physical or intellectual) vision of that subject. Even the hundred cream-buns of which the schoolboy is dreaming are part of a spiritual world. For it is not the subject-matter of dreams but their innate nature that places them on the spiritual plane.

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to us as more real than the physical world. Unless we suffer from a nightmare, we are loath to part from our dreams, and try to hold on to them as long as we can, almost fighting against waking up. Is not our reluctance possibly due to the fact that, however dimly, we feel that the dream-world is the one worth living in, whereas the material one is, if not an illusion, at any rate a rather imperfect and distorted version of it?

If it be true that in the dream-world we step into spiritual reality, then it must be assumed that in dreams we can perceive answers to riddles that no amount of 'scientific' knowledge could offer us. And, if it is so, the importance that the priests of Aesculapius and the seers and prophets of the past attached to dreams becomes more understandable. They must have suspected (or even known) that in dreams depths of knowledge were revealed that defied all other means of approach.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> How is it then, it may be asked, that so often a truth that comes to us during a dream and that appears to be very profound, proves, when we write it down upon awakening, complete drivel. The very fact that we remember such a truth sufficiently clearly to recapitulate it word by word, indicates that it has come to us not during our dream at its deepest, that is, when we inhabited a purely spiritual world, but just before final waking up, when our mind was beginning to stir. That truth is therefore not the product of our dream, but of a half-awake and therefore imperfectly functioning mind that has simply seized upon a subject that has floated into it from the dream.

One morning upon waking up I found myself repeating a sentence whose wisdom impressed me so deeply that I kept memorizing it until I was sufficiently awake to grasp a pencil and paper. Even while writing it down I was still convinced that it contained some epoch-making revelation. Upon reading it, I found the following words "In all his endeavours, from the yoke-yellow mullet to the deep violet of a celery clasp". The sentence is typical of the state that is neither dream nor wakefulness. Rather than define it as a dream-product, we should compare it with the gibberish of a drunkard whose control over his mind is practically non-existent.

Having, in its very imperfect condition of the moment, given birth to a trivial thought, the mind is not sufficiently awake to recognize its triviality. But the very fact that it has produced something of its own—its first activity since its awakening—is sufficiently impressive to make it accept that product as equally impressive. So when we are startled by the profundity of a thought just before awakening,

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The problem with which they were faced was to interpret the dream-vision correctly, and to draw from it the right conclusions—as Joseph did at the court of the Egyptian Pharaoh. Their problem was not dissimilar from that of the modern psychoanalyst. But whereas the latter is interested only in certain repressed urges of his patient, the ancient seers tried to extract from the dream interpretations of a more general, even universal, value. The prophetic trance of a Greek priestess was a deliberately provoked dream, the significance of which was for mankind and not herself alone.<sup>1</sup>

## II

### TRUTH AND AWARENESS

By saying that dreams provide us with a gateway to ultimate truths, I by no means wish to imply that these are the only or, merely, the main ones. Ultimate truths, those concerned with the very essence of existence, can reveal themselves in many different ways, though rarely, if ever, through the intellect alone. They can be involved in Newton's 'self-evident' law of gravitation as well as in Plato's more esoteric *Eidos* of Love; in secrets about faith, beauty or passion, such as are revealed by great poets and artists; or the 'hidden' laws at the back of natural laws, such as were perceived by saints and seers from Lao Tse and Jesus to Jacob Boehme and Paracelsus. What is common to all such discoverers of ultimate truths is that these come to them as though in a dream: a vision revealed out of the subconscious. However much deliberate mental or emotional effort may have prepared the ground for the vision—and without such preparatory slogging visions refuse to come

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we are rather like the fond mother who for the first time hears her baby cry 'Ma-ma'. At that moment this first articulate sound escaping from the baby's mouth appears as more significant than anything the mother herself could possibly have uttered.

<sup>1</sup> Even in our own times investigators of the meaning and mechanism of dreams do not limit themselves to the psychoanalyst's narrow confines, but try to read more deeply into them. To mention but a few of the better-known investigators: Rudolf Steiner, W. J. Dunne, P. D. Ouspensky.

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—the revelation itself was born not within the intellect, the main instrument of our consciousness, but when some less earth-bound faculties came to function.

Though we do not know what those faculties are, and call them intuition, genius, or anything equally indefinite, we do know what their sum-total is. It is awareness—something that is not beyond definition. Awareness is identification with an object: not merely emotional or intellectual identification but one in which our entire being participates. This can be achieved only if our love and curiosity for an object are sufficiently strong to make us forget our own ego. Only then can we see an object as it really is. To the great artist or inventor, the lover and the dreamer, it is given to see such visions, to achieve such identification.

Often when we listen to an inspiring piece of music, or look at a great work of art, we feel as though we had left our usual world behind and entered some dreamland in which everything is not only more beautiful but also less opaque than normally. Truths that were hidden become revealed, and old truths assume new meanings. Is not such deepening of our vision due to the fact that the painting or the music opens doors to truths that the artist himself perceived in the rarefied atmosphere of a dream?

### III

#### DREAM 'TECHNIQUE'

Everything that enlarges our knowledge and understanding is bound to be of benefit to our relations with others. If dreams can bring about such inner enrichment, then we should be wrong if we made no conscious use of them.

Unfortunately, this is anything but easy, and may be quite beyond the reach of some people. For how can we gain control over something as volatile as dreams? Most of us cannot even remember them in our waking hours.

Yet I do not think that it is impossible to exercise a control, however limited, over one's dreams. In my own experience I have found two ways of doing it. Thus I can make myself dream of a particular subject, provided it is one that preoccupies me



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much at the moment. Secondly, if my dreams are unpleasant and threaten to turn into nightmares, I can force myself to become aware that they are dreams. And once I have realized (in my sleep) that I am dreaming, I can change the character of the dream, and dream of something less unpleasant. I have repeated that experiment frequently, and it leads me to the conclusion that even in deep sleep our I (or ego) need not be entirely deadened.

The use of the word 'I' in this connection may seem baffling or misleading. For who, or what, is the 'I' that evidently still functions while the rest of me is profoundly asleep? It cannot be the will *per se*, will being merely the instrument of something higher than itself. It cannot be my mind (or intellect). For that, too, has ceased to function, and, while asleep, I am not able to think or reason. I can only conclude that it is the spirit, the one and only entity that exists in the same state whether I am awake or asleep, and whose manifestations do not depend upon any of the more earthbound means of cognition, such as brain or nervous system.

Whether there exists any general technique for even so limited a control over one's dreams, I do not know. But I believe that one way is to follow and observe our dreams when they begin forming, that is to say, at the stage when we are still between waking and dreaming. The longer we succeed in remaining conscious of those early dream-images, the greater our power to control them even beyond the semi-dream stage.

Now to choose a particular subject for our dreams, and to dream of it, can be far more than a mere exercise in dream 'technique'. By dreaming of that subject, we see it revealed in many of its aspects that were hidden to us in our waking state. Moreover, we see it not only from new points of view, but also far more 'deeply' and with an entirely new clarity.

If the dream-world really belongs to the purely spiritual dimension, then we are bound to see in it the spiritual reality of a subject and not merely the one that our limited intellect permits us to see in our daylight hours. An insight into such a reality naturally ought to give us a deeper understanding of the subject than one obtained by conscious cerebration.

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Let me put this point differently. To gain true knowledge of any object whatsoever means becoming aware of it. (This form of 'identification' has already been discussed earlier in the chapter.) Now in the normal course of events our instruments of awareness are our mind and our senses, to which may be added the far more complex instrument of our instinct. The boundaries that surround our mind and senses are extremely narrow; those of instinct are wider. But even these are circumscribed by heredity, environmental influences and the sum total of our life-experiences.

The powers of intuition stretch further still. But in dealing with intuition, we touch upon something that transcends the limits imposed by the ordinary means of 'rational' cognition. Moreover, while mind, senses and instinct—our three weapons acceptable to science—can be handled more or less deliberately by everyone, not everyone knows how to widen his means of awareness by the use of intuition.

Thus is the awareness of most people limited. But in dreams their spirit is free, and their enhanced awareness enables them to unlock secrets to which their waking life cannot possibly provide a key.

There is, however, one important reservation to be made. Though in dreams our spirit may be free, it will still be too much tied to the memories that our imperfect mind and senses have gathered in the course of the day to perceive spiritual truth without hindrance. Those memories—it is they that determine the character our dreams assume—act as screens between ourselves and unalloyed spiritual truths. The deeper we dream, i.e. the further away we move from waking cognition, the less opaque those screens become.

But it is doubtful whether, without some innate gift or very advanced training, we can remember what we see in our deepest dream-moments. Perhaps we never achieve the state of unfettered and 'pure' seeing, except after death, and then only after all the distorting notions that our waking perceptions place upon truth have departed from our memory.

Psychoanalysis has shown that dreams can reveal many truths about ourselves that could not have been ascertained by

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any other means. But psychoanalysis deals only with certain aspects of our subconscious. It is not concerned with the wider spiritual domains which, though within ourselves, are 'placed' even more deeply than the subconscious. Those domains embrace the universal and the supra-personal.

There are, of course, exceptions, such as Jung, who have given much thought to these supra-personal aspects. But on the whole, psychoanalysis, both as a doctrine and a therapy, eschews them.

### IV

#### WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM DREAMS?

Even those of us who have neither training nor inclinations for psychoanalytical interpretations of dreams would admit that in dreams we see ourselves, as it were, more vividly and in higher relief. Our ambitions are less disguised, our failings are more visibly exposed than they are to our conscious mind. It is as though we were looking at ourselves through a stereoscopic camera. What is more, our wishes and ambitions exist not merely in the sphere of possibilities but become fulfilment and thus 'reality'. We not only wish to be able to fly, but we actually *do* fly and experience the sensation and the very 'mechanism' of flying. And we do this with a vividness that by far exceeds the sensation of a flight in a real aeroplane.<sup>1</sup> We not only wish to commit this or that crime, but we actually commit it. Thus we experience fully the crime potentialities that are within us. The most exotic or exalted of our ambitions are no longer mere wishes, but are consummated by us. And in doing so, we learn what our actual reactions to such a consummation are.

In ordinary life we have no means to assess our possible response to flying, except by getting into an aeroplane and taking off. Will we feel frightened, indifferent, exalted? Will we enjoy the sensation of speed, or be sickened by it? The dream of flying provides the answer for us.

<sup>1</sup> When, while serving in the R.A.F., I for the first time took over the controls of the aeroplane in which I was flying, I did not feel half as 'conscious' of the sensation of flying as I am whenever I fly in a dream.

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But dreams can offer us more than the fulfilment of our desires. They can show us also what is even more important: namely the true motives for our desires. In our waking state we are apt to hide these behind idealized wish-images of ourselves, behind excuses, or intellectual self-justifications. We even know how to silence or to bury our conscience. In dreams such subterfuge is beyond our means, and we are faced with our motives in all their shameless nakedness.

This is, in fact, one of the most significant aspects of dreams: they show what is hidden or latent in us when translated into visible action. As in a good novel, there is nothing of abstract theory in them, and the character of the hero reveals itself in action. Or to change the comparison: in our waking state our vision of ourselves is like a blurred photograph; in our dreams that vision is like a good painting in which everything significant is clearly delineated. The painting only *appears* to be surrealistic or chaotic. Its supposed surrealism is due only to our own inability to interpret it correctly. Our interpretation makes it seem disjointed, as if its progressive phases ended abruptly, without cohesion. In reality, each phase follows the preceding one logically and is an outcome of it. But the links between them are so brief and tenuous that we do not remember them.

Since we see ourselves in dreams more vividly and 'transparently', and experience in them sensations and adventures that, though withheld from us in ordinary life, nevertheless are always in character with our individual selves, our self-knowledge must inevitably be deepened and widened.

And if our dream-knowledge of ourselves is deep and wide, so in a lesser degree is our dream-knowledge of other people. Seeing them within a purely spiritual sphere, we have access to knowledge that is otherwise denied us. 'Yet our dream-pictures of others,' the thoughtful reader interjects, 'are even more disjointed and, usually, more superficial than those of ourselves. When we dream of Mr. A., all we see is the pimple on his nose, infinitely larger and more significant than it is in reality, but we see nothing of his character.' Quite so: for even in dreams our habit of running away from certain truths does not leave us, and we concentrate on external trimmings and trappings. And

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in dreams both externals and spiritual truths are equally revealed to our gaze. While our spirit would love to soar through the clear air of untrammelled truth, it is being held down by the thousand masks and devices that blur our vision when we are awake. So though in dreams we may see a great deal of what is significant in Mr. A., we notice above all the pimple on his nose. And so preoccupied are we with the pimple, that upon waking it is the only thing about him that we remember. If in the daytime we knew how to observe and think *significantly*, we should remember in the morning the significant discoveries we have made during the night. And such discoveries would certainly widen our knowledge and understanding of Mr. A. and thus help us in our relations with him.

### V

#### A 'PROPHETIC' DREAM

If dreams of the past and the present can, by widening our knowledge and deepening our understanding, be of help in human relations, this would be even more applicable to prophetic dreams. Whether such dreams as recorded by history and the various religions were authentic or not, I cannot tell. Far more competent students have argued their case for centuries. Here again I feel that personal experience may possibly be of greater help than theoretical discussion.

In my own experience I have had one unmistakably 'prophetic' (or, possibly, telepathic dream). I have described it in greater detail in another book (Introduction to *We Have Seen Evil*, Faber & Faber, 1942), and for our present purpose the following facts should be enough. One night in 1940 I dreamed of one of my best friends, R.C., who then served in the army in France. I had never dreamed of him before, and the dream was an exceptionally vivid one. 'Your presence,' I wrote at the time 'was more intimate and almost more tangible than I had ever known it in the fourteen years of our friendship. You complained of cold. Instead of the usual eagerness on your face, there was a new peace. . . . Your presence was so vivid . . . that it remained with me throughout the wakeful hours. So when

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finally I got up, I couldn't help writing to your sister to tell her of your visit.' Three days later his sister rang me up to inform me that R.C. had been killed in France.

As I had not been thinking of R.C. during the days preceding the dream, and, like everyone else, had many friends who were in the forces, and whose uncertain fate might have preoccupied my subconscious, I find it hard to accept the theory that my dream was the result of some subconscious anxieties about R.C. If it was coincidence that I dreamed of him in the particular way on the particular night, then it would seem strange that the dream should have had such poignancy and vividness as to compel me to write about it to his sister with whom I normally never corresponded. Never before or since had I felt sufficiently deeply stirred by a dream to write about it to another person. I am driven therefore to the only plausible conclusion: that during my dream I must have reached some region in which I was not limited by any of the 'normal' conceptions of time and space. Far less convincing would seem to me the explanation that spiritualists would undoubtedly put forward: namely that the 'departed spirit' of my friend came to visit me. He had not visited people who were held to him by much closer links, his mother or sister, to each one of whom he was deeply devoted, and who would have been far more entitled to such a visit.

## VI

### NOT ONLY AESCULAPIUS

Our main trouble in trying to incorporate into our waking knowledge that gained during dreams is the difficulty of recalling not merely a single scrap of the dream but a whole consecutive sequence. For only in such a sequence can we find meaning. Unconnected scraps usually remain as meaningless as would a sentence in a novel of whose plot, characters, and circumstances we were ignorant, even though we knew its author and recognized his style.

Presumably there exist special techniques for developing the requisite memory. My own method is much more amateurish than any of such accepted techniques is likely to be. From

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experience I have learned that if before going to sleep I make up my mind sufficiently strongly to dream of a particular subject and then really dream of it—I usually remember in the morning the few aspects of the dream that would seem to be the most significant. At other times the bedtime decision by itself would seem enough, without the addition of my later efforts to ‘direct’ my dreams. The answer awaits me all ready-made upon waking in the morning. This process is similar to the one that enables us (especially when young) to remember in the morning a lesson that completely defied us on the preceding evening. The piece of poetry that we had to learn by heart, the mathematical problem or the chemical formula that had completely defied our memory throughout the day, nestles as securely in it as if by birthright.

May not the explanation be that whereas in our waking efforts it was merely our intellect that tried to gain possession of the desired knowledge, during our dream it was our spirit? Moreover, the process took place not on the intellectual, but on the spiritual plane. Since on that plane there is neither separateness nor duality, the spirit could absorb the desired object in its entirety. This achieved, the object inevitably became absorbed by the ‘whole’ of us, including our mind, with the gratifying results observed on the following morning.

. . . . .

The possession of spiritual knowledge (in contradistinction to a purely intellectual) is not necessarily a guarantee of deeper or clearer visions during dreams. But those who have such knowledge will undoubtedly be the better qualified to find right interpretations.

Presumably everyone eager to make use of his dreams has his own technique for achieving his aim. The technique of psychoanalysis is only one among many, though the one to which in the last fifty years, the greatest attention has been paid. Since our whole body of science is almost exclusively materialistic, this technique of psychoanalysis is bound to loom disproportionately. This, however, does not mean that we shall stop at that technique with its very obvious limitations. What

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matters to the ordinary person is that, apart from the psycho-analytical aspects, dreams provide us with additional means for widening our understanding, and are thus of importance in our relations with our fellow-beings. The day may not be far distant when we shall find 'scientifically' that Aesculapius is not the only god who speaks to us during our dreams, and that we may hear in them even the voices of Apollo and of Zeus himself.



## CHAPTER IX

# INFLUENCE OF THE DEAD

## I

### THE CASE OF RUTH K.

I knew Miss K. rather less well than her mother. Though warm-hearted, she was at the same time proud and strong-willed. As a girl she had decided to become a nurse, and in the days when I first met her worked devotedly in the county hospital of our district, but took absolutely no interest in home life. She was very fond of nature and music, and read a great deal. Though she lived in her mother's cottage, she spent her entire days at the hospital in town, travelling thither each morning. Her widowed mother resigned herself to the fact that her daughter would never be more than a visitor in her house, and Ruth was indeed on the verge of taking a flat with two other girls who were working at her hospital, when the unforeseen happened. She fell in love with a young man who worked in an estate agent's office.

No one seemed more surprised than Ruth herself. Derek was a few months her junior, and as different from her as could be imagined. He was of a light-hearted, almost cynical disposition; was interested neither in music nor in serious reading, and his two passions were crossword puzzles and the cinema. Fortunately, he shared Ruth's taste for the country and for long country tramps. Moreover, he loved domesticity and considered that a wife's proper place was the home. But he seemed to reciprocate Ruth's love fully, and a few months later the two announced their engagement.

Though Mrs. K. was profoundly pleased, she had her doubts as to whether the two young people were really suited. Derek expected his wife to be first and foremost his companion, the mother of his children, and a good housekeeper. Could Ruth

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be expected to alter her disposition of a lifetime? She stated categorically that she would go on with her work, and that since she and her husband together would earn enough, they could afford a housekeeper to look after their home. Mrs. K. comforted herself by the thought that, once happily married, her daughter would, like so many women before her, change her views and dedicate herself wholeheartedly to her vocation as a wife.

A few months after the engagement had been announced, the war of 1939 broke out. The two young people decided to postpone their wedding till after the end of hostilities. In 1940 Derek joined the R.A.F. At first Ruth wanted to follow his example and volunteer for the W.A.A.F.s; but the head of her hospital persuaded her that she would do far more useful work by staying on in her job.

The separation added new fuel to Ruth's love. She wrote to Derek every day; whenever possible, she would visit him at, or near, his aerodrome. Then Derek was sent to Africa, was wounded, recovered, and was sent to the Far East. In 1944 he was killed in Burma.

. . . . .

What his death meant to Ruth no one knew. She never said a single word to anyone about it, not even to her mother.

At first nothing seemed to change in her life: she went on with her work at the hospital, and maintained her other interests in life. But three months after Derek's death she announced that she was giving up the furnished room in town, to which she had moved during the war, to live again with her mother, and travel each morning to the hospital. A few months later—it was summer 1945—she decided that a woman's proper place was the home, and asked to be released from her duties at the hospital. All the efforts of the head-doctor, who respected her highly, were of no avail. Her only answer to his pleading was that her duty was to help her mother. Mrs. K. was well up in the sixties and had to do all the work herself: there seemed every justification for Ruth's decision. Nevertheless

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Mrs. K. was completely taken by surprise by her daughter's generous decision.

At thirty-two Ruth began to learn all the domestic jobs in which she had never shown any interest, and within a few months developed into a first-rate housekeeper. For the first time in many years Mrs. K. could sit back and take a rest. But she still felt uneasy. When a year after Derek's death she tactfully mentioned to Ruth the subject of marriage, her daughter asked her—very calmly and even gently—never to speak of it again. She could love one man and one only, and would never be 'unfaithful' to Derek.

Ruth's entire life became more and more dominated by Derek and her memories of him. Everything of his she possessed—his letters and photographs, the few presents he had given her, his civilian clothes that he had left behind in her safe keeping—became her greatest treasure. Twice each year she visited his mother in the North of England. During those visits she spoke apparently of nothing else but Derek and his childhood. She even gave up her former interests in music and reading. Instead she took up crossword puzzles, and several times each week visited the cinema.

When I saw her, about three years after her fiancé's death, I was surprised to see how much she had aged. She looked a 'typical' middle-aged spinster. There was something tight-knit and rigid, almost lifeless, about her features, and her pronouncements struck me as dogmatic and even cynical. It was difficult to identify her with the girl of earlier years. She had given up everything that was natural to her, and had become the slave of a dead man. She had next to no interests in the many things that at one time had meant so much to her; and people she seemed to regard as a sort of disturbing background to an existence centred in Derek. She had become, in fact, like the characters in one of Henry James's stories, who built their entire lives round the memory of their dead daughter, and who had even persuaded a young man to 'marry' her shadow. For them, so for Ruth, the wishes, tastes,

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hobbies, likes and dislikes of a dead person had become infinitely more real and more important than anything that pulsating life round about her had to offer.

### II

## THE DEAD AND THE LIVING

Inevitably, after a major war, cases such as Ruth's tend to become typical rather than exceptional. Jack Smith, who dies in his bed from duodenal ulcer or low blood-pressure, may leave behind broken hearts; but his death does not place the hero's halo round his head.

Men killed in battle are inevitably, and rightly, placed on a hero's pedestal. Their death served a definite and unselfish purpose; it was not due to personal disability or accident, but life was laid down voluntarily and usually at the prime of life. Because in death the warrior becomes a hero, everything related to him automatically assumes heroic proportions. That for twenty or thirty years he may have led an inconspicuous, even trivial, life is forgotten; and in everything he had done throughout all those undistinguished years there will be reflected some of the light that shines from his new status.

Whatever we may think of such distortion of fundamental truth, it represents a process psychologically perfectly justified. For is not the final consummation of a life as much part of it as was everything that led up to it? Can we separate a pedestrian life from the heroic death that followed it?

For many a young man war has meant a greater and nobler experience than any they had known before. It may have provided them with their first opportunity for selfless service, for true comradeship, self-denial, adventure, and, even, the heroic deed. By quickening the entire rhythm of their existence, by heightening their perceptions and intensifying their feelings, it placed them within a sphere that under peace-time conditions might well have been beyond their reach. Thus it need imply neither sentimentality nor childishness, if those who mourn their departure place them on a pedestal to which they would hardly have been entitled

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had their humdrum existence not been cut short by the war.

Because we regard a father, husband, son, or friend killed in battle as a hero, his influence upon us and our relations with others becomes exceptionally pronounced. To try to liberate ourselves from that influence easily appears to our conscience as a sacrilege.

. . . . .

Even those who have died an ordinary death easily assume in our memories a character different from the one we accepted while they were alive. The influence they exercise upon us is determined by their 'post-mortem' character rather than the real one. Not only do we remember best their virtues, but we also tend to idealize their shortcomings and to interpret them as virtues: intolerance we view as moral single-mindedness, ignorance as self-sufficiency, libertinism as broadmindedness, avarice as forethought, wastefulness as generosity, pedantry as orderliness, aggressiveness as courage, and so forth. Since it is natural for us to try to emulate the dead we love, we allow their supposed virtues (that in reality were weaknesses) to shape our character. It is only others who notice that we have begun developing unpleasant traits: for it is, ultimately, they and our relations with them that suffer from the consequences.

Other dangers are inevitable in the influence that the dead may exert over us. They are inherent in its immovable and rigid character and its indifference to changing circumstances. If the dead undergo changes in our valuation of them, this is rarely due to changes in them (such as might be caused by some new information about them), but to our own development and change of outlook. It is such changes that are responsible for the succeeding 'fashions' in our valuation of great figures of the past. Rarely are great statesmen, artists, or any other public characters valued identically by succeeding generations. But the change is not in Mr. Gladstone, who from being a great political leader becomes nothing but a 'pompous bore', nor in Raphael who has suddenly lost his genius. It is in ourselves, and it is the particular spirit of our

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epoch which, as one mood replaces another, now pushes them from their pedestal, now dusts them off and restores them to eminence.

### III

#### ANCESTOR WORSHIP AND TRADITIONS

The dead can affect our conduct in other ways beside our individual memories of them. Entire civilizations have existed that were based on the worship of the dead. The one based on Confucianism is probably the most logically and meticulously worked out. We find a similar, though less all-pervading, worship of the dead in ancient Greece, and even more so in Rome, where, because certain dead could be deified, even some of the living were pronounced as of a divine status.

What does such worship, as exemplified in Confucianism, imply? That the example of the departed provides the true measure for the conduct of the living, whose behaviour should never offend against the standards set by the dead. This means, to put it bluntly, that life should be guided by death. While such a philosophy easily makes for extreme conservatism, it may also encourage exceptional striving for high ideals. For only what is considered noblest in the conduct of the dead is good enough to be emulated by their heirs.

Even in modern Western countries there exist disguised remnants of past worship of the dead. We find them, among other spheres, in the importance attached to certain traditions of the past. Indeed, much in the make-up of the ultra-conservative person, for whom any tradition is superior to any innovation, is the result of an unconscious submission to the ancestors. Though the British are usually considered as the most tradition-loving Western people, it is the Germans who are tradition-slaves *par excellence*. In no other country was the business of parades and marches in honour of the dead, of battle anniversaries, old regimental banners and all the rest, taken with equal seriousness and solemnity. The deification by the Nazis of every 'hero' of their Revolution was the last step in a movement that has been prominent throughout German history. Siegfried was always Germany's legendary

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hero. But his death, and not his life, was venerated as his highest fulfilment. Likewise in Wagner's operas—the most typical expression of Germany's genius for music—it is usually the death and not the life of the heroes that is most glorified.

Once we assume *ipso facto* that everything our ancestors did is right, we easily preclude progress and adopt also what was bad in their ideas. Yet we must not conclude from this—as fanatics for 'progress' would have it—that all inherited precepts must be discarded. On such an assumption we should be throwing out the valuable with the worthless. What is wanted is neither their blind worship, nor destruction, nor neglect, but judicious and unsentimental assessment followed by assimilation.

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Not unnaturally, ancestor worship is wont to go hand in hand with the belief that the dead are watching benevolently over the living and guarding them. Such a belief imposes far-reaching duties and responsibilities. For we could hardly invoke the help of our ancestors, and trust that it may be forthcoming, without in return conducting ourselves in accordance with the standards laid down by them. Our attitude is very much like that of any theist who trusts in divine help and hopes to secure it by living up to God's commands. Indeed, wherever and in whatever form ancestor worship exists, the dead are automatically raised to the status of minor deities.

## IV

### AVENGING THE DEAD

Avenging their wrongs is yet another form of the bondage in which the living can be held by the dead. It has been one of the most popular subjects of literature and the drama for many centuries, and even in our own times the film has often made use of it. There was a period after the second world war when Hollywood produced film after film dedicated to the heroic deeds of one G.I. avenging the death of his 'buddy'.

The countless vendettas of individual persons, families, clans, tribes and even nations—in which both Oriental and Western

## INFLUENCE OF THE DEAD

history abound—have been fought at the bidding of the dead and not of the living. Often they have been conducted against all counsels of reason or self-interest. And yet their call had to be obeyed, even if such obedience meant misery and even annihilation to those who conformed. Once again we see that service on behalf of death can be a far more inspiring force than any demands and hopes that life has to offer. And such service creates its own elaborate codes of conduct and honour, its own customs and methods of warfare, even its own morality. The rights of the dead count for infinitely more than those of the living.

### V

## SPIRITUALISM

That even in our own times the dead can exercise great power over the living may be gauged from the great popularity of spiritualism, a popularity confined to no particular country, class or age group. When a person believes that he can establish contact with the dead and receive messages from them, such messages—whether genuine or not—will have deeper influence on him than anything that the living could say, or do. So the bereaved person will invariably be convinced that the dead possess greater wisdom than the living. Does such an attitude denote lack of mental balance? It probably would if our answer were to be based exclusively on the more typical kind of trite ‘message from the dead’. But let us cast aside whatever prejudices against spiritualism we may entertain, and remember some of the (admittedly hypothetical) findings we arrived at in examining certain aspects of dreams.

We have in that connection accepted that in a purely spiritual state (such as we experience during dreams) our vision is not limited by the ordinary handicaps imposed by our mind and senses. If we also believe in personal survival (and at the present state of our knowledge this must be chiefly a matter of belief) and the ability of the dead to pass on communications to the living, then it would follow that even a person whose judgement during his lifetime we dismissed as imperfect may in his post-mortem state be possessed of a knowledge beyond



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his reach when alive. Even if every single message supposed to have come from Plato, Napoleon or Cleopatra, from this Mr. Smith and that Mrs. Brown were trite, there would still be no proof that no genuine messages from the dead can be received.

But since our purpose is to argue neither the case for or against the truth of spiritualism, what concerns us is the fact that millions of men and women believe in it and let their relations with other people be vitally influenced by it. Besides, every time we try to follow the precepts of this or that great philosopher, poet or statesman of the past, even the most rational-minded among us permit ourselves to be influenced by the dead. Often it is enough for a man to die to bestow upon his views an authority they had never had during his lifetime. The fact of his death alone performed that miracle and gave him his power over us.

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Summing up, we can say that what is true of the influence of tradition is equally true of that of the dead. If we were more rational and less sentimental, we would accept from either what we judge to be positive for our own purpose and the circumstances in which we live, and avoid falling into the error of accepting this or that detail merely because death or tradition has given it its peculiar glamour. If we do not accept that safeguard, we easily follow the example of Miss K. and place the image of the dead between ourselves and life, and refuse to follow the latter on its own terms. However noble our motives, this always must lead to frustration and retrogression. And has anyone the right to sacrifice the living for the dead?

## CHAPTER X

### SITUATIONS

#### I

#### ANTICIPATION

A young man is waiting for his girl. He knows she won't arrive for another ten minutes or so—she's never quite on time. Nevertheless he is always there at seven sharp. Of course he would rather she didn't keep him waiting, especially as she has to be back by ten, her parents being of the old-fashioned sort—and three hours are gone in a jiffy. Yet he knows that he only pretends to mind waiting. For really he enjoys those ten minutes of anticipation. What dress will she be wearing, the blue or the brown? Has she made up her mind about their next outing? Will she let him kiss her? Oh, there is such a lot of pleasant thinking to be done! He also likes envisaging her silky hair, her shapely legs and those pretty lips of hers. As he stands and waits, his desire for her grows with every minute; more and more intently he looks in the direction from which she will come, all his senses focused on but one aim.

And then at last he spots her. He instantly notices that her hat is a little more tilted to the back than usual, and that she has a posy of marigolds pinned to her lapel. When she comes nearer, he takes in every detail of her appearance as though some new sense had been added to him. Yet normally he is not particularly observant. 'Hello, Mary,' he says when they finally meet, and his tone of voice and his movements betray his satisfaction. She notices at a glance his excellent mood, and so they both sail off on their evening's adventure in a state of something like bliss.

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Once again the young man is waiting for Mary. Of late she has been keeping him waiting rather long, and he cannot

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pretend that he likes it. Quarter past seven is gone, and his initial sense of exhilaration gives room to a few moments of anxiety: has something happened to her? Nonsense, it's sheer carelessness on her part. She probably thinks he is no longer good enough for her. That R.A.F. bloke she talked to the other night . . . you can't trust any woman. Well, he won't wait a minute longer than half-past. But when the clock on the nearby church strikes half-past, he decides to wait until a quarter to eight. Anyhow it's too late now to do anything else. With every minute his anger rises. Fancy her turning up the other night with a scarf round her head instead of a proper hat. The fashion, as she called it. Fashion his foot, making herself look cheap. And not letting him kiss her when they parted, and suddenly turning uppish. As though there weren't dozens of other girls, only waiting.

The clock strikes a quarter to eight, but he doesn't hear it, so preoccupied is he with his gloomy thoughts. When at ten to eight Mary finally turns up, he hardly sees her, or notices anything about her appearance. 'Hello, handsome one,' she greets him, as though nothing had happened.

There's no denying that he's pleased to see her. Yet all he can say is, 'You might as well not have come at all'. 'But Jack, darling, I couldn't help it, honest I couldn't. Mum isn't well and I had to prepare supper for Dad.' She pushes her arm into his, and though her physical nearness normally gave him a deep thrill, he is at present hardly aware of their bodily contact. In fact, it takes him some time and effort to wrench himself free of his resentful gloom, and recover his normal spirits.

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Waiting is only one of hundreds of situations the innate character of which determines our behaviour towards other people. Alternatively, or perhaps concurrently, its character is determined for us by the behaviour of others towards us. Pleasurable anticipation usually pitches us into a higher key and sharpens our senses. It can even give us so keen a contentment as to become more gratifying than fulfilment itself. Much as we are inclined to allege that 'there's no time like the

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present' and to pretend allegiance to the 'Carpe diem' philosophy, when totting up life's score of pleasure, we soon realize how much of it has been anticipatory or retrospective. But as we have seen, waiting can also have the opposite effect, and bring out what is worst in us.

Waiting for a pleasant event can influence us in the same manner as our wait for a human being. It easily puts us into a mellow mood in which we are only too ready to please others who do not share our joyful anticipation. It is as though we wished to compensate them for the comparative bleakness of their prospect. On the other hand, the anticipation of an unpleasant event will make us more irritable, more unfriendly to others, as though we held them responsible for our anticipatory worries, and tried to 'take it out of them' by a reverse process of compensation.

## II

### TOGETHERNESS

Of course not all situations can be enumerated whose intrinsic character affects behaviour and our relations with other people.

From the many situations of that nature we might first choose one which, for want of an existing comprehensive word, we shall call 'togetherness'. It is fairly common among lovers, husband and wife, or any other two people who, having lived long together, develop many common links, tastes and habits. Met singly, they might be colourless. But when together, each assumes a very distinctive personality. The very fact of being together delineates them clearly; it would appear that the presence of their life-partner gives them self-confidence, or they become eager to cut an impressive figure in front of him or her; or, again, they might be inspired by the wish not to let that person down. In other cases, however, togetherness makes people less positive than they would be by themselves. Their partner's presence may intimidate them when other people are present, and make them feel self-conscious.

By the effect the presence of a life-mate produces, we usually can tell whether the union is a happy one. Human relationships

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are of course too complex and too individual to show identical manifestations in two different cases. Yet on the whole it can be stated that where a union is a happy one, togetherness brings out the better qualities of each partner; in an unhappy one it has a frustrating effect.

(We must not forget in this connection that what might seem dullness in a couple blessed with togetherness is often something quite beyond their control. The achievement of togetherness requires effort on both sides. The additional effort of expanding to, and co-operating with, all and sundry may prove too much to be contemplated.)

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One of the unmistakable signs of a happy union is that, in the presence of others, the two partners involuntarily stress their togetherness, and not their respective individuality. Thus neither of them is likely to say 'I like Dickens' or 'I dislike haddock', or 'I have a new car', or 'I found a penny in the street', but: 'we like Dickens, and we have done this or that. Tastes, beliefs, experiences, are all referred to in the plural possessive, as though the individuality of each partner mattered so much less than their union with one another.

It is always sad to hear a husband or wife, who in the past invariably referred to everything with this first person plural, suddenly speak of *my* car, *my* views, *my* this or the other. Something has gone wrong in that marriage. The unmistakable reaction to a matrimonial disunity is an affirmation of one's own individuality. If, however, the word 'we' still has to be used, instead of the mellowness with which it formerly was pronounced, there will now be something hard and cold to it, as if the light had died away.

There is, of course, another, an entirely grating use of the first person plural. For it may denote not harmony between two people, happy in the consciousness of their union, but possessiveness on the part of one of them. It is then used as a kind of subterfuge or make-believe, intended either to remind an unwilling mate of the existing union and supposed one-ness with the speaker, or to drive home to outsiders, who might

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otherwise doubt it, that the union really exists. And so, 'We so like going to the pictures, don't we, Bert?' 'Bert and I never keep any secrets from one another, do we, darling?', are questions by no means always indicative of togetherness.

### III

#### SECRET MISDEEDS

Another situation with a specific effect upon the relations between two people is that created by the attempts of one of them to hide something from the other. This happens very frequently between parents and children, friend and friend, a man and his colleague, and so on. It is probably commonest among lovers, or husband and wife, when one of the two is being unfaithful to the other, or doing something of which the other person would probably disapprove.

The secret resolve to perform the deed leads the prospective wrongdoer to excesses of exaggerated friendliness, loquaciousness, forced joviality, or good humour. The man who intends to be unfaithful to his wife goes out of his way to be nice to her, trying to anticipate her wishes and win her approval. By such strategy he hopes to set her mind at ease, and at the same time to relieve his own conscience.

### IV

#### FAVOURS EXPECTED

Most of us behave in a similar fashion before we request a favour from another person. The child who hugs his mother in order to obtain from her some little favour does not differ much in his strategy from the mother who hopes to obtain a favour from her husband; from the officer who hopes to wheedle extra leave from his C.O.; from the member of parliament hoping to be remembered by the Prime Minister during the next reshuffle of the Cabinet. They all act in the knowledge that a favour implies a bargain. The price they are ready to pay for it consists in their 'better' behaviour towards the person able to grant it. Whereas the unsophisticated child is blatant

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in his methods, with bursts of sudden affection and equally sudden obedience, adults act more subtly and take greater care to hide their motives. Otherwise there is little difference in the strategy of the simple and the wise.

### V

#### TEASING

Another specific situation fairly common among any two people held together by bonds of intimacy is that of the one partner taking the loyalty of the other so much for granted as to meet it with the technique of teasing.

Now, teasing administered within narrow limits may be a pleasant way of furbishing up one's affection with the trimmings of humour, or of hiding it behind a light-hearted manner. This is in fact how teasing usually starts. But, once having taken up the teasing attitude, some people keep it not merely to express their affection, but also their criticism and animosity. What had started more or less as a joke becomes a habit, and so we find the well-meaning wife who cannot address her husband without teasing him; the brother who thinks he must affirm his manly superiority by constantly making jokes about his younger sister; we find a similar situation even among friends.

Once teasing has become a habit, the offender goes on with it, imagining that his victim enjoys his little pinpricks and innuendoes as much as he does. He is also quite unaware that what started as a lighthearted sign of affection has crystallized into a formula. That formula is the exact measure of his sense of security (even, of possession) in regard to the other person.

Now few things are more humiliating than to be taken for granted and to be regarded as the possession of someone else. We may willingly give our whole loyalty to one person, and never even dream of withdrawing it; but sooner or later the moment is bound to come when we no longer appreciate being taken for granted. Even in the most intimate relationship mutual affection thrives the better if it is supported by respect. If we assume a person's loyalty to be so unswerving that we

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need not bother about proving ourselves worthy of it, we imply a fundamental disrespect for him.

As a rule, the teaser does not realize that he has been playing with fire until it is too late. To his intense surprise he suddenly finds that in that fire the affection of the other person has been burned away completely. What is left are not cinders, but, somewhat paradoxically, ice or tepid water!

The lesson to be learned by the teaser would seem pretty obvious: never take another person's feelings for granted and never play with them. Never forget that a worthwhile relationship cannot be kept alive on the light soil of teasing, but that it calls for respect and ever-renewed signs of appreciation.

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Many situations in which we find ourselves in life are of our own making and can be shaped by our own effort; others have been thrust upon us. To struggle against them might be futile. The wiser course is to give preference to those situations that choose us rather than to the ones that we should have chosen ourselves. 'Rough-hewing' is the one scope we are always guaranteed, and life will have its way with us.



## CHAPTER XI

### THE OLD AND THE YOUNG

Even the most complex relations between contemporaries escape the difficulties that crop up so easily between people of different generations. Whenever the young accept the authority of the old spontaneously (as a young Tory might accept that of Mr. Churchill, or a young dramatist that of Mr. Shaw), differences of age will not handicap their relations. But when that authority is not voluntarily accepted, even the wisest counsels of the old will be dismissed in favour of the foolish ones of younger men.

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As usual in similar cases, the old blame the young, and the young the old, for whatever misunderstandings arise between them.

The old are apt to forget that the philosophy out of which their views have crystallized is a set one. However valuable in itself, it will probably not be flexible enough to meet fully the newer conditions under which the young are forming *their* philosophies. It may be the outcome of great experience and knowledge; but to some extent these will be coloured by the likes, prejudices and idiosyncrasies of the generation that gave them birth. And the young are not likely to share any of these.

So if the old wish to avoid misunderstandings with the young, their first effort must be to see a given problem not in the light of their own philosophy but in that of questing and irreverent youth. Their effort, if genuine, will impel them to identify themselves with the young, that is, with their thirst for novelty and adventure, their curiosity for the insignificant and superficial, and their particular sense of values. In short, they must endeavour to relive their own youth.

Unfortunately, after a certain age it seems almost impossible to remember the interests, problems and ambitions of younger

## THE OLD AND THE YOUNG

days. A man of fifty, or even forty, easily gets irritated by little things that for someone much younger appear of great importance. He has completely forgotten that when he was eighteen, to catch a glimpse of a certain girl, to be on time for an appointment with her, to cut an impressive figure, to appear in the 'right' clothes on a particular occasion, not to be thought poor or *gauche*, to use the correct slang of the moment—that these matters were of more vital consequence to him than any of the greater problems that preoccupy him now. Such matters must be taken seriously. Yet even when they are sympathetic, the older tend to treat them with a touch of condescension that the young are only too quick to detect, and to resent. For they regard it as deliberate belittlement.

Another thing we forget when we grow older is that the young take their problems more seriously than we take ours. They will not accept the advice of an older person unless they feel that it is prompted by the same concern, even passion.

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In the age-youth relationship, misunderstandings are not always the fault of the older group. Even their best-meant advice will not be of much help if the young do not make the effort to accept it without mental reservations. It must be admitted, however, that this is more difficult for them than might appear. Whether they want to or not, they suspect that there is some ulterior motive behind the proffered advice, such as the hope of 'moulding their character', or of affecting the course of events in a manner agreeable to those who advise them. Often their suspicion is justified. Unfortunately even when it is not, they persist in retaining their inner reserve. The resulting situation in all its sterility cannot be redeemed except by an effort of the young themselves. Unless they know for certain that their suspicion is justified, they must refrain from always suspecting their elders of ulterior motives.

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Not everything that represents age or authority is necessarily of no value. To dismiss age as age is as foolish as to deem a man

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negligible because he is a Frenchman, a Catholic, or an intellectual. It is just to dismiss the views of an older person which are outdated, or of no use to ourselves. But such views are not the monopoly of any one generation.

Many young people are convinced that their youth as such gives them an indisputable superiority over their seniors. They are unaware that whilst the advantages of youth are so self-evident as to be almost blatant, those of age, though equally real, are less obvious.

A young man—not some sophisticated undergraduate, but a sound level-headed workman—once told me that he considered life after forty not worth living. A man of such advanced age was no use in the boxing ring or on the football field; he could not stand up to a whole night's dancing; girls were not interested in him, and, even if they should be, he no longer could satisfy them in the way a young man could. In short: there was not much meaning left in life after forty, and little enjoyment to be got out of it.

There may have been a little truth in the statements of the young man, but his conclusion betrays a complete ignorance of the subject he dogmatized about, and is nonsense. Yet it is that sort of nonsense that determines the views of the young about people older than themselves, entailing a fundamental disrespect for maturer age. At its best, that disrespect is mellowed by pity; at its worst, it is indistinguishable from contempt.

To respect grey hair because it is grey is sentimentality. To respect the knowledge and experience that sometimes go with it, and the suffering that may possibly have brought it about, is a different matter. Even the pleasures of age, the very existence of which my young workman denied, even they may sometimes deserve respect. For they will probably express a man's humanity rather than his animal-spirits, and be less self-centred than those of the young.

There have always existed certain almost insolubly difficult relationships between older and younger people. Besides the inescapable clashes between parents and children, there is the bullying of a younger brother or sister by an elder; the preying

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of the younger on the older ones; the exploitation by the young of the affection of doting parents; the tyrannies of mothers-in-law trying to run the lives of their daughters-in-law; the indifference and callousness shown by the young to 'useless', old and ailing relatives, and so on and so forth.

When there is a spark of love left to illumine any of such relationships, ways are always found to overcome difficulties. Where love has been replaced by cold indifference or, as so often happens, by an only ill-disguised hatred, the difficulties appear to be wellnigh insurmountable, and the relationship easily becomes a veritable 'hell on earth'.

Since the second World War several fresh difficulties have been added to the old ones. The housing shortage, common to practically every country from the U.S.S.R. to the U.S.A., has often compelled ageing parents to share a home with their married children. The mother accustomed to be sole mistress over 'her' kitchen, her sink, her brooms, her larder, has to share these with a young newcomer whose domestic ways she regards as inefficient, slovenly, wasteful. The daughter or daughter-in-law who had been dreaming of independence in her own home finds herself thwarted at every step, bullied, treated as a child. A silent struggle for supremacy begins, and it is fought with the weapons of obstinacy, mutual interference, and an unreasonableness such as neither of the fighters would ever dream of showing in any other set of circumstances. Or the ageing parent has to live in the home of the married child where he or she has no rights, and finds himself or herself humiliated.

However difficult situations such as these may be, they need not be despaired of. Once again, mutual sympathy, tolerance and tact can achieve a great deal.

Often a clear-sighted ruthlessness (which does not mean heartlessness but certainly does mean a clearing away of 'dead wood' to make room for new growth) will achieve far more than softness. By being less rigid in her views, and disposing of greater physical and nervous reserves, the younger woman is usually in a better position than the older one to establish a *modus vivendi* satisfactory to both.

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Then there is the ghastly problem of the old who have nowhere to turn and are left to the mercy of charitable institutions, or the workhouse. Though in many cases their fate would be less bitter if the younger members of their families showed greater consideration, on the whole this is a social and economic problem affecting society at large, rather than one of individual human relations.

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Summing up, we can say that the old would derive much greater benefit from their association with youth if they met them with greater tolerance and patience, and treated their slight-seeming problems with seriousness. The task of the young is equally obvious: to show less suspicion, more trust, and, above all, greater willingness to accept the truth that nothing that youth offers can replace certain contributions of age. Age and youth are as complementary to one another as are mind and body, man and woman. Both can widen their vision through one another, and gain aspects of knowledge that they would seek in vain among their own contemporaries.

PART III

THE POWERS THAT BE



## CHAPTER I

# THE EVIL OF POLITICS

It is, to say the least, questionable whether present-day preoccupation with politics improves the spiritual, moral or intellectual climate of the world. For political preoccupation pushes spiritual and cultural values—man's noblest birthright—into the background. More than any other single impersonal factor, politics are apt to pollute our common ethics, our individual integrity, and our very approach to truth. By stimulating violent emotions beyond the range of reason, they produce extremes of attitude and behaviour, turning a naturally conservative-minded person into a reactionary, and the progressive one into a communist, leaving little room for the golden mean. In almost all manifestations of life extremes indicate an unhealthy and feverish condition.

## I

### PARTY INFLUENCE

Political influence upon human relations would be less harmful if it really *were* political, that is to say, affected such matters as patriotism, citizenship, the individual's duties towards the community. Unfortunately, when modern politics touch upon these subjects, they do so only as if by accident. For what we still call political influence is really Party influence. Both in their spirit and their methods modern politics appeal first and foremost to our Party sense. They induce us to see life not as a whole but partially and one-sidedly. Under their touch every aspect of reality turns into a Party shibboleth, and all problems are reduced to the cheap formula: Party in power *or* Opposition. Public schools, modern painting or architecture, foreign travel, rights of women, the team spirit, are good or bad according to whether or not they foster the



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interests of a particular Party. Right or Left are the only labels by which we judge these ideas and institutions.

The irony of such childish dogmatism is underlined by the truth that very few people belong consistently to either the Right or the Left. In economics we may be the one, but in educational matters adhere to the other, or to something in between; our morals may be of a very advanced character, but our taste in art ultra-conservative, and so forth. Yet whatever a man may feel in his heart about any given subject, Party influences soon knock out of him the power of discrimination, and turn him into an unreasoning automaton. Though Nazi Germany should have taught us to what spiritual and intellectual depths this sort of Party influence may lead, in our perversity we always refuse to learn from history. In most countries of the world the prevailing trend is towards the acceptance of greater Party influence and its inevitable product: State control.

## II

### STATE CONTROL

Whether State control really gives us a fairer distribution of wealth, more efficient railways, more coal, better maternity clinics, and so on, is not an isolated consideration: we have to judge whether the benefits are worth the price paid for them. For State control, of which nationalization is but one aspect, never halts at those useful measures. And by exercising control over one sphere of life after another, the State inevitably robs us of great treasures: our sense of responsibility and initiative, and our freedom to learn both the pleasant and the unpleasant lessons in *our own* way, that is to say, in the way which profits us most.

‘Dependence on the State’, writes Prof. C. G. Jung, one of the few creative thinkers of our times, ‘can be measured in terms of loss of the instinct of self-preservation, which is a deplorable symptom . . . Every person hangs on to the next, with a false feeling of security; for one is still swinging in the air even when hanging in the company of 10,000 other people.’ Basing himself on his exhaustive and first-hand knowledge of psychology,

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Jung adds, 'The citizen's instinct of self-preservation should be preserved at all costs, for when man has once become severed from the nourishing roots of his instincts, he is simply the shuttlecock of every wind that blows. He is then no better than a sick animal, demoralized and degenerated, and nothing short of a catastrophe can bring him back to health' (*Essays on Contemporary Events*, Kegan Paul, 1947, p. 54).

What we receive in return for giving up our individual instinct of self-preservation is a certain modicum of comfort, and if we happen to belong to the very poorest classes (but only then) a slightly higher material standard. We also get infinitely more opportunities for shelving responsibility, for not taking decisions of our own, for letting our sense of initiative go to seed.

Though the creators of the State-controlled paradise claim to act in the name of Humanitarianism, they rob us even of the chance of being true humanitarians. For since the State provides for everything, why should the suffering of our neighbour evoke whatever sense of pity may be left in us? Charity, compassion and, finally, alms-giving belong to the most intimate provinces of the human soul. But in the State-ordained paradise there is no room left for such private luxuries.

Even the wild beast of the forest, the unthinking fishes in the sea, and birds in the air, prefer a life of struggle, fight, possibly hunger and cold, to one in a thermostatically controlled *de luxe* cage. Man's supreme possession that the beasts do not share is his spirit and the consciousness of self that goes with it. Freedom of choice is the spirit's gift to him. Deprive him of these birthrights, and he has lost what makes him human: his ability to reason and decide for himself, and to match his individual resources against those of the surrounding world. Provided that economic injustice has not weighted the scales against him too heavily, and has not robbed him of the means of earning his living, he even has the right to starve—should he choose to do so. Why did our ancestors and those of the present-day Americans rise indignantly against the sin of slavery? Because, though many of the slaves were better off in

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a state of servitude than in that of freedom, slavery was an outrage against their very nature as men.

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In our own times kings have been robbed of their divinity and omnipotence; the churches are no longer regarded as the infallible guides on our journey through life. But since, like sheep, we would rather look up to an external authority than to our own spiritual faculties, we willingly deify the State and turn it into father and mother, general provider, and even church. Yet what is that wonderful entity, the State? 'It is the agglomeration of all the nonentities of which it is made up. If it could be personified, the result would be an individual, or rather a monster, which would be intellectually and ethically on a far lower level than most of the individuals of which it was composed, for it represents mass-psychology raised to the highest power' (C. G. Jung, *Essays on Contemporary Events*).

Though the State is nothing but the projection of the crowd, it can become far more dangerous than the crowd. Unlike the latter, it possesses power and authority. An action by the crowd that can legitimately be treated as a felony is committed by the State not only with impunity but with all the sanction of authority behind it.

. . . . .

If those for whom man is nothing but a conglomerate of physical and chemical substances, and the State-controlled paradise an ideal, were really logical, they would expel from their paradise Shakespeare and Buddha, Beethoven and Michelangelo. For you cannot dismiss a spirit that can express itself only in utter freedom and at the same time find room for manifestations that are unthinkable without that freedom.

The doctrine of the absolute supremacy of the State—the only logical implementation of which is totalitarianism—reduces man to a means. In a doctrine that acknowledges God, man is an end. According to the former view man cannot be more than a rather complex, but not very perfect, machine; according to the latter, he is imbued with a spirit that is divine.

## THE EVIL OF POLITICS

Whereas in the totalitarian view his only rights are those granted him by his fellow-men (ultimately focused in the State), in a spiritual conception his rights are inherent in his human nature. According to that conception, the fundamental laws that govern him are neither man-made nor variable from country to country, age to age, but are eternal and concerned solely with the permanent verities of right and wrong, good and evil.

### III

#### MASS VERSUS INDIVIDUAL

Possibly no other sin of the State with totalitarian aspirations (however subtly disguised) is less excusable than that of envisaging human beings as members of a crowd and not as individuals. For, in a crowd individuals feel and express what is their lowest common denominator, never what is their highest. Crowd-anger, crowd-hatred, crowd-revenge are something far greater and more terrible than is the sum of the individual hatreds of all its members. As a crowd, people assume a new and different personality, bereft of all the moral controls that under similar circumstances would function almost automatically in each of its individual members.

Hence the complete fallacy of regarding the crowd as a sum of individuals. Yet this is precisely what the rulers of a State-controlled paradise are doing. 'You cannot make a man by standing a sheep on its hind legs', wrote Max Beerbohm, the smiling philosopher who hides his shrewd knowledge of humanity behind the exquisiteness of his manners. 'But by standing a flock of sheep in that position you can make a crowd of men . . . Segregate him (man) and he is no fool. But let him loose among his fellows, and he is lost—he becomes just a unit in unreason.' And Beerbohm adds wisely, 'A crowd, proportionately to its size, magnifies all that in its units pertains to the emotions, and diminishes all that in them pertains to thought' (*Zuleika Dobson*, Wm. Heinemann, 1911). C. G. Jung, writing of small Switzerland and large Germany, says, 'We have only to multiply the Swiss population by twenty to become a nation of eighty millions, and our public intelligence and morals would then

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be automatically divided by twenty. For when people are thrown together in huge masses and considered only as a herd, it has the most devastating moral and psychic effect *upon the individual*' (My ital.) (*Op. cit.* p. 52).

. . . . .

More honest than governments with totalitarian aspirations are the Hollywood pundits who admit that they assess the average intelligence of the crowds for whom they cater as being that of a child of eleven or twelve. The governments, on the other hand, pretend that they are concerned with the highest aspirations, wellbeing and intelligence of the citizens. In reality they concentrate on the crowd, which means on the lowest common denominator. Hence their indifference to anything that would be of real assistance to individual pursuits, desires or tendencies. They encourage instead all that tends to turn the individual into an impersonal number. Education for so-called citizenship—yes; but an education to strengthen what is individual in character, initiative, gifts, or opinions—no.

If national economy demands sacrifices, the first values that suffer are those cultural ones that help to develop individual thought. When honours are distributed, you require a microscope to find the few names that represent learning, the arts, literature, philosophy, music, true spiritual endeavour. (In this matter of honours France is better off than Great Britain, and Russia is an exception. Yet even in Russia the official honouring of intellectuals tends to be sheer 'window dressing'. Hopelessly mediocre people are given honours because they work loyally along Party lines, and thus not really in the interests of culture but of politics.)

The silent conspiracy against spiritual and cultural values represents one of the rare instances where Party differences are of little account. When in Great Britain Conservative Governments were in power, left-wing intellectuals quite rightly laid the blame at their door, and pointed out that a Government embodying vested interests could not be expected to pay much heed to cultural values. But when a Socialist Government came to power, the intellectual diet of the nation did not

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improve greatly. When during the coal shortage of 1947 broadcasting had to be reduced, it was not the low comedians, the jazz and the crooners or the racing results that had to suffer, but the programme that catered for spiritual and cultural values: overnight it was stopped altogether. But then, playing down to what is the lowest common denominator of the masses rather than concentrating on, and trying to foster, what is highest in them, is the way of least resistance and, thus, popular with the majority of Governments, irrespective of their political colour.

No one in a free democracy would wish to rob people of their freedom to have bad taste. But, while not depriving them of that freedom, the State and its cultural agencies should offer them at least as many opportunities for improving taste as they do for cultivating doubtful likes and addictions.

It is something of an irony that Marx, who more than any other man is responsible for the present exaltation of the crowd at the sacrifice of the individual, fought in his earlier days for the liberation of *individual* man.<sup>1</sup> That not his earlier but his latter-day thesis should have been accepted was inevitable once man divorced himself from God.

For man possesses no especial nobility except in those of his attributes that derive from his relation to God. Remove from him the peculiar personal bond that unites him with God, and he is no nobler—in fact far less noble—than a cow or a stinging nettle. He may be more powerful and more dexterous than either, but these attributes confer no mantle of nobility upon him. Divorced from God, he is a robot, a machine.

. . . . .

Because we became indifferent to God and sold ourselves to materialism, it was inevitable that of the two great civilizations of the past we should follow the inferior one, namely the Roman and not the Greek. In Athens there existed a complete integration between State and citizen. Both were permeated by a belief in the existence and the wisdom of the gods. In

<sup>1</sup> Read in this connection his essay *Philosophie und National-ökonomie*.

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Rome there was no such integration; instead there was the domination of the citizen by the State. Both made obeisance to the gods, but took of them an extremely 'rationalistic' view, which differed little from pure scepticism. Thus, while in the Athenian conception man relied primarily on cosmic forces, in the Roman conception he depended entirely upon the State.

So long as the great Western nations—the Spanish, Dutch, French or British—were Empire builders, they had to establish precepts of justice, law and administration among peoples who had but the vaguest notion of any of these. In those days they were right to follow the example of Rome. But today we are no longer concerned with the colonization of barbarians. Whether we are British or French, our concern is with a nation that has two thousand years of a Graeco-Roman-Christian past behind it. Even if we would, we cannot completely divorce ourselves from our spiritual origins and traditions. Dependence upon 'cosmic' forces would seem more appropriate than blind subservience to a temporal State.

## IV

### SANCTITY OF FREEDOM

Man is born free not because of this or that political or social system in which his parents happened to conceive him, but because, alone among God's creatures, he is endowed with a self-conscious spirit, and can discriminate between good and evil. Today, when even 'the psychologist firmly believes in the individual as the sole carrier of life', no State has the right to take that freedom away from him, even by giving him paradise-like conditions in return. 'Morality', says Jung, 'rests entirely upon the moral freedoms of the individual, the indispensable condition of which is freedom.' (*Op. cit.*, p. 74.) The Grand Inquisitor in Dostoyevski's *Brothers Karamazow* wanted to give happiness to millions by depriving them of their freedom. In that process he repudiated Jesus Christ and showed himself to be anti-Christ.

Yet what if freedom leads to evil, you may ask. This potentiality for evil is part and parcel of the state of freedom. For

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evil is the commonest key to suffering, and only through suffering can man overcome his lower nature. Even the most perfect State-control cannot do that for him. The freedom to suffer is as much man's birthright as is his freedom to enjoy the happiness he craves.

The most perfectly organized ant-heap is not a substitute for even the most imperfect human society. While the State will always find itself compelled to reduce certain secondary freedoms of the citizens, its legal system alone ought to be the repository of such suppression. For no human authority can lay claims upon the citizen's primary freedoms, such as that of conscience and thought, of expression, and all the others that the progress of the last few thousand years has established as fundamental.

It is yet another irony of the intellectual dishonesty to which politics lead that those most eager to suppress individual freedom, so that the supposed good of the crowd may increase, adopt the opposite point of view when their particular political ends in a different sphere are to be served. Thus, when the presence of the British Raj was defended on the grounds that it assured fairer administration and general improvements for the Indians, the political doctrinaire replied, 'You have no right to suppress a nation's freedom by bestowing upon it benefits that it may not necessarily desire.' Quite so. Yet how much more does this apply to the spiritual freedom of the individual!

What effects an exclusive State supremacy must have upon human relations should by now be fairly obvious. Practically everything worth while in such relations depends upon individual initiative and on what might be called the personal touch. Individual idiosyncrasies are more important to human relations than the wisest and best-meant directives from outside. Let the State machine mould human relations according to its own pattern (the cinema is doing this already), and they turn shallow and artificial: clichés and platitudes replace the spontaneous word, and instead of individual discovery and



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opinion we find parrot-like reactions bereft of meaning. The very emotions become prefabricated.

Like faith in God, human relations depend upon the most jealous preservation of their 'private domain'. The predigested thoughts from a Government pamphlet, and emotions copied from those displayed in the movies, can have no room in them.

Yet, you may ask, do not the Russians enjoy the most satisfactory human relationships in spite of the totalitarian grip in which they are held? Presumably they do, that is to say, if they are too high-minded to object to colleague reporting against colleague, neighbour against neighbour. But it is hardly fair to compare Western nations, for generations enjoying spiritual and intellectual freedom, with people who in all their history have never known freedom. The Russians have always lived their individual lives *in spite* of the Tsars, the Ochrana, and Siberia. In their long history they learned that they were unable (or unwilling) to organize their external life without Government *ukases*. Without rigid State control their communal life would break up in chaos. So they have chosen to have nine-tenths of their existence dictated and supervised by the State, and only a small fraction of it in which to express their own free will. In countries where the freedom of the spirit and of the person is as essential to life as air, the Russian example would be hard to follow.

## V

## POLITICS AND WAR

Whereas in the past those chiefly responsible for wars were kings, princes and the Church, nowadays that guilt has to be laid to the door of politics. Even the proverbial armament manufacturers and international financiers could not put their designs into effect if there did not exist the machinery of politics to help them.

With the possible exception of Germany, the people of every country prefer peace to war, which they are compelled by instinct to condemn. Ivan in Charkov is as little concerned with the 'vicious imperialism of Great Britain' as is John in

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London, or Jean in Toulon with 'Russian appetites' (though not necessarily with those of the Kremlin). No doubt, like the ordinary citizen, the politician abhors war, and would much rather achieve his object by peaceful means. (Hitler himself preferred the bloodless conquests of Austria and Czechoslovakia to the less peaceful over-running of Russia in 1941 and '42). But the politician is not identical with the political machinery of which he forms but a part. The desire for visible success, prestige and power is far more compelling in political than in any other activity. And often these can be achieved only by policies that sooner or later (and quite against the will of those responsible for them) are bound to lead to war.

It is in the hands of the politicians (and of the organs they use, such as radio, press and other means of propaganda) to focus the attention of ordinary, peace-loving citizens on real or imaginary injustices, and, by magnifying them, to mobilize a general support that might not otherwise be forthcoming.

John Smith and Piotr Ivanov, whether they be farmers, doctors, bankers or labourers, have little difficulty in understanding one another's aspirations and reaching a mutual agreement on whatever concerns them most. Even in Russia it is not the common citizen who is bent upon converting the rest of the world to communism—war or no war—but the handful of political leaders and the few hundred thousand men and women whose active support they receive. Together, they form a politically-minded minority that by no means represents the true desires of the vast majority.

. . . . .

The greater the power of a political oligarchy over a country the greater is the danger to the peace of its neighbours. Only countries where political leaders are comparatively weak, and where the civic consciousness of the people at large rather than their politicians decides issues of general concern (e.g. Switzerland), are no threat to their neighbours. The major wars of the last hundred and fifty years were not instigated by countries whose leaders were limited in their political power, but by those where such power completely overshadowed national life:

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France under Napoleon, Germany under Bismarck, William II, and Hitler, Japan under the Emperor.

Why should politics so often lead to results for which non-politicians, if deemed personally responsible, would be condemned to life-long imprisonment or the gallows? To the reasons already suggested we may add: of all the great activities in which men engage, none is based less on the principles of either logic or ordinary common-sense than politics. The most common gospel from which politics (not merely in respect of foreign affairs) derive their sense of direction is that of purely fictitious myths. There is the myth of racial equality or inequality (as the case may be), of '*Lebensraum*', of colonial necessities, or 'legitimate national aspirations', of a 'historic mission', of the 'will of the people', of a nation's 'heroic character' (*pace* Thomas Carlyle, author of *Heroes, Hero Worship, and the Heroic in History*), and so on and so forth. Postulates and theories that would not be tolerated in the thesis of an ill-balanced undergraduate form the unshakable rock upon which politicians base their dealings affecting the fate of nations. Hardly one of their cardinal postulates has ever been proved true, honest or beneficial to their respective nations.

## VI

### WHAT CAN THE INDIVIDUAL DO?

If some readers should object that so far I have limited myself to denouncing politics without making constructive suggestions, the answer is that, while this book cannot eschew the study of a subject as relevant as politics, it does not set out to provide political or, in fact, any communal solutions. It is concerned with individual problems. But it must needs accept the political realities as they are. To design a political utopia is not difficult, as has been proved over and over again both by their frequency and their utter neglect by communities and individuals. We all know (or, at least, ought to) what the functions of the State (and of politics) are, and where their limits lie.

The job of the State is twofold: to organize, administer and protect effectively the nation's material and any other resources;

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and to provide it with the means for material, social and cultural welfare and development. Apart from those tasks, the State has no right to interfere with anything concerning the essential individuality of the citizen: his spiritual convictions, cultural views, freedom of initiative, morals and sex life (except by protecting the safety of others from assault). Since the modern State trespasses upon territories to which it has no right of access, what is more imperative than devising new political abstractions is to find means for adjusting individual life to *existing* politics. Our question therefore is not: how can modern political life be replaced by something better, but: how can the citizen save his soul (and his individual life) within the existing political framework?

Obviously even the most individualistic citizen must render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. But his tribute should not be a grain more than his just due. Since his own complacency in the past is to a great extent responsible for the direction our civilization has taken, he cannot complain, and must submit to an increasingly totalitarian system and to the dictates of a majority vote. (That such a vote does not necessarily represent the views of the numerical majority, or that it is not necessarily based on dispassionate reason but on the appeal of catch-words and our emotional response to them, is beside the point.)

To pay Caesar what is Caesar's means that the citizen has to submit to the existing laws and regulations, and fulfil his civic duties as best he can. But, this achieved, he must draw emphatically the line between his life as a citizen and that as a private individual. If he is to save his soul, there can be no integration of the two.

If he wishes to continue his more 'private' life, he must be prepared to fight doggedly for any and all the freedoms still left to him, and without which that life would become impossible. This means that he will lend his most active support to all those 'watchdog' movements and organizations that fight for his civil liberties. In everything concerning his 'private' life—his family, friendships, religion, leisure, pursuit of culture and hobbies—he will act as though the State-inspired type of

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life did not exist. Though this in itself might not be easy, it is not enough. What matters is that the private life should be inspired and permeated by a spirit superior to the one responsible for the State-controlled life. This means that the individual must try to live up to the highest principles of his personal creed. Sheer individualism need be neither better nor worse than any other attitude, and may in fact denote egotism. I am in no way better than any robot, unless I am guided by a personal sense of responsibility; unless my humanity, tolerance and charity are wide; unless I use the freedom (of time and means) still left to me more positively than a robot might; in short, unless I prove by my actions and by what I am that my philosophy is superior to the one imposed upon, or deliberately chosen by, some robot. The practical application of a philosophy is always its most effective propaganda. Thus everyone anxious to preserve life's nobler values has a duty to support every manifestation of his philosophy.

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We cannot on the one hand believe in permanent spiritual values, and on the other remain indifferent when such values are prostituted. Thus we cannot believe in a culture that can be attained only by personal effort and even sacrifice, and then spend all our leisure in cinemas, at dog races and football matches, or reading nothing but trash and thrillers, or listening to the tritest offerings of the radio.

We cannot believe in friendship, and yet make no effort to achieve more than the excitement of fleeting affairs or sporadic acquaintanceships.

We cannot believe that man is of divine origin (and thus spirit as well as matter), and then follow the modern State-gospellers who preach in the name of a utilitarian materialism. This means that we cannot regard materialistic science as providing answers to all our riddles and the panacea to all our ills. It also means that we cannot accept the yardstick of science for measuring manifestations that are not 'scientific', those of religion, culture, love, or human relations. Such a refusal implies the acceptance of a philosophy that lends meaning to

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the thousand 'inexplicable' matters for which there is no scientific justification nor explanation.

We cannot be opposed to pure materialism and at the same time dismiss religion. If we believe in man's right to freedom because of his spiritual nature, then we must accept a philosophy that justifies and explains that nature and its implications.

. . . . .

Many of those opposed to the State-manufactured paradise dream of nothing but a return to the past. This is a fatuous and sterile dream. For in human evolution the clock can never be put back. Besides, much of what was good in the past—peace and graciousness of existence, freedom of choice and action, respect for the human personality, strong moral codes, steadfastness of faith, spirit of adventure, and many a tradition and custom—was obtained at the price of undeserved privilege or injustice, of exploitation and intolerance. For there has never in the past been an epoch when life was gracious and easy for everybody. If the values of the past are to be recovered in the future, they will have to be purified in the waters of greater knowledge, tolerance and selflessness. But because a good thing suffers from an admixture of evil, we are not entitled to throw it overboard as useless. There is not much of equal value to take its place.

Our civilization has produced very few fundamentally good or new things. The chief blessings of life—truth and honesty, love and friendship, zest for knowledge, enjoyment of beauty—have existed for thousands of years. All our incomparable scientific achievements have failed to provide us with a single new virtue or sensation (with the possible exception of that of speed). Our greater measure of justice, equality and knowledge is more than outbalanced by greater strain of living, increase in fear, dehumanization of work, and the reduction of the human personality to the level of an impersonal cog in a machine. Human relations have, in spite of material progress, grown poorer.

So, while we cannot reclaim the past, even if we would, we must try to save its essentially good qualities and strengthen

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them by means of the greater experience with which modern psychological, scientific, and social knowledge have indisputably endowed us.

Is there then no other alternative for the citizen unwilling to become a mass-produced automaton, but to lead a dual life: in one, doing his inescapable duty as a citizen; in the other, anxious to preserve the freedom of his soul? Indeed there is no alternative to this duality.

Though such an existence can never be regarded as the ideal, we must not forget that there were very few periods in human history when the life of individual and citizen were identical. Even members of the 'privileged' classes could not always integrate their two personalities. They lived under a tyrant of whose policies they disapproved; in opposition to the Pope or in fear of the Inquisition; they were ruled by foreign conquerors; they held views that were unpopular or even heretical in the eyes of those in power; they belonged to the Opposition. Excommunication, the dungeons, the stake, exile, and banishment of past ages speak to us loudly of the minorities (often even large minorities) who tried to order their lives without faithfully adhering to the prescriptions of authority.

It was not only religious or political unorthodoxy that led to a dual life and its painful consequences. Dante was as much an exile as Lenin, the German Albert Einstein as much as the Pole Chopin, Oscar Wilde as much as Victor Hugo. Countless Britons and Americans who found the spiritual or intellectual climate of their countries unbearable sought a less oppressive air in foreign lands. The Athens of Pericles, in which the ideal of a citizen was to identify himself as much as possible with the State, was not the rule but the exception.

If we view a dual existence in the light that history sheds upon it, it ceases to appear 'unnatural' or alarming. And if we remind ourselves that our innate imperfection always forces us to compromise between the ideal and the expedient, we can accept such dual existence with equanimity.

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And what happens if the aim of the individual and the claim of the citizen clash? Each clash of such a nature can of course only be dealt with on its own merits. But if our faith in the principles we hold is steadfast and fully backed by reason, a solution of our dilemma will prove much less difficult than it would be if our notion of our rights as individuals and our duties as citizens were hazy.



## CHAPTER II

# THE ECONOMIC INCUBUS

### I

## COMFORT OR CIVILIZATION?

Learned gentlemen with solemn brows and impressive letters after their names tell us that 'the causes of most wars are economic'. And so hypnotized are we by both the letters and the brows that all independent thought is frozen out of us, and we really believe that wars are caused by economic necessities. Yet a moment's reflection would show us that none of the major wars of, say, the last hundred and fifty years has been fought because of such necessities. Napoleon did not go to Moscow to cart back from it Ukrainian wheat nor to Egypt for the fertile mud of the Nile; Bismarck did not attack France because he envied her the vineyards of Champagne; the wars between Serbs and Bulgars, Greeks and Turks earlier in this century were not fought for Balkan tobacco and olives; William II raved for Germany's 'place in the sun', not because such sun-bathing would improve the complexion of German economy; and it was not for the economic advantages that he hoped to find in its ashes that Hitler set the world on fire.

Of course, if a war offers the victor economic advantages, so much the better for him. But it is not economics that set the powder alight. It is political and ideological incompatibilities, nationalism, and innumerable irrational myths (already discussed in the previous chapter).

By saying that economics are the main cause of wars, we imply that economics control our life and our death as well. We do this because we have come to evaluate progress, success, even happiness, mainly in terms of money, the simplest and most convincing symbol of economic supremacy. Like the physical sciences, now dominated by the atom, economics

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have become an incubus over which we are losing control. While the sciences have to provide us with answers to every riddle of the universe—even those of religion and love—economics, it is alleged, are able to offer us all means for happiness.

We claim that civilization and culture are the yardstick with which we measure our progress. So can we demonstrate that neither is inevitably bound up with economic prosperity?

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Few nations in history have achieved a higher level of culture and civilization than ancient Greece. But, blinded by the splendour of her architecture and sculpture, the nobility of her literature and philosophy, and the maturity of her political sense, we completely forget that she never was rich, in fact was extremely poor. But then we also forget that so much in Greek civilization and literature is 'a great protest against the modern view that the really important thing is to be comfortable'. (F. C. Burkitt, *Essays on some Biblical Questions of the Day*, Cambridge, 1909.) Graced by a genius in which an incomparable intuition was matched by crystalline reason, the Greeks knew that harmony and a right sense of proportion are infinitely more important than wealth and economic security.

Unlike the human relations of the Athenians, ours are dominated by the dream of economic security. It would seem to be beyond us to accept the view that culture, civilization and even happiness can be attained in spite of economic insecurity. The Athenians have proved that, without knowing where the next meal is to come from, a man can not only rear a family and be happy, but also produce great works of art, discuss philosophy, and concern himself with the well-being of his country.

Unfortunately, unlike the Greeks we have ceased to desire a life of adventure. Instead, we spend most of our time trying to escape from it into the make-believe world (for what else is it?) of economic security, and instead of spending most of our time in the pursuit of worth-while things, we consecrate our

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leisure to dreams of colossal 'pool' winnings, to longings for financial betterment, to arid business discussions.

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The danger that besets a man whose occupation forces him to constant contact with money—the financier, the broker, the insurance man, and even the ordinary merchant and tradesman—is that he may soon find himself assessing all values of life in terms of money. Money is the lowest symbol of the goods of this earth. To assess life in its terms is to bring it down to its lowest material denominator. The Greek philosophers recognized the danger inseparable from trade with moneymaking, and it was with a view to diminishing undue preoccupation with the pleasures of making money that Plato in his *Laws* (917) forbids bargaining, and insists on fixed prices.

The Athenians would no doubt have led more 'comfortable' lives if they had put economic security before beauty. Rather than build the temples on the Acropolis, they might have laid water pipes to the Piraeus and banished the nasty smells of their city by introducing a sewage system. But who would as much as remember ancient Greece if such comforts had meant more to them than the works of Phidias and Sophocles; if the City-State had worshipped at the shrines of efficiency, bodily comfort and economic security rather than at those erected by their artists, poets and thinkers! 'They did not want to be rich for the sake of riches . . . They had overcome the wild passion of the child or the savage for "too much"' (*The Greek Commonwealth, Politics and Economics in Fifth Century Athens*, by Alfred Zimmern, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1924).

## II

### POVERTY

We moderns are obsessed by economics because we fear nothing so much as poverty, and strive endlessly for economic security. Let us then examine poverty and its reverse, and study their effects upon human relations.

The more obvious effects of uncontrolled poverty and its

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concomitants—economic anxiety, undernourishment, overcrowding—have been investigated and exposed by so many reformers, sociologists, doctors, politicians, and even novelists, that by now even the legendary dukes and money-barons in the isolation of their unburdened luxury must be aware of them. So we can limit ourselves to examining the influences of poverty that are more or less within our control.

The first interesting discovery we make (that is, those of us whose life or work takes us among the poor) is that poverty *per se* is far from embittering a man or poisoning his character. As a rule it does not even inculcate in him a grudge against the world. It produces such an effect only if he has a clear conviction that he has been treated unfairly by circumstances or his fellow-men, or if he suffers from a strongly developed class-feeling. Otherwise poverty is accepted as a natural condition, like a weak stomach or lack of good looks.

Apart from the extreme poverty that does not permit of even the lowest standard of subsistence (and that in most Western countries in peace-time has been reduced to a minimum), the term poverty covers too many different categories to permit any valid conclusions about its effects upon human relations. A woman brought up in luxury and used to many servants, who suddenly has to live on a few hundred a year and do her own cooking considers herself extremely poor, even though she may never have to worry over next quarter's rent. A man with the low wage of a few pounds a week, but thrifty and sensible, may prove to be far richer than a spendthrift who earns twice as much.

In every class of the community, whether rich or poor, there are always certain people with inner resources of spirit and mind that will compensate them for this or that kind of material disadvantage. Others, lacking in such resources, fall back upon their disadvantages, using them not as an inducement to overcoming these, but as a lash with which to castigate those better off than themselves. Naturally it is among them that we find the more extreme exponents of class-feeling. Even if their poverty is due chiefly to themselves—to their extravagance, laziness, or ill-judgment—they will contrast it self-righteously

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with the 'undeserved' good fortune of those better placed than themselves. But is not such an attitude common to all people, irrespective of their incomes? Hardly a factory, office, army barracks, school, Government department, is free from people nursing grudges against those whom they consider to have been more favourably treated.

When the grudge against society becomes extreme, it usually leads to political fanaticism (*vide* the original inspiration of so many Nazis and Communists),<sup>1</sup> or to felony. Psychological investigations have shown fairly conclusively that the primary cause of such anti-social behaviour is not poverty but an unsatisfactory psychological development of the individual, though undoubtedly aggravated by poverty. But unresolved childhood problems with their subsequent repressions and complexes, would in any case have led to reprehensible behaviour. The peculiar conditions caused by poverty merely foster the original disposition, and remove some of the restraints that more favourable circumstances might have imposed. The parents, brothers, and sisters of many a criminal, though reared in the identical state of poverty, lead highly respectable lives, uncontaminated by any tendency towards crime.<sup>2</sup>

### III

## WORK

In the past, work had a distinctly positive influence upon those engaged in it, and on their intercourse with one another. This is no longer so, for industrialization and mechanization have robbed work of most of its stimulating, inspiring and enjoyable elements.

<sup>1</sup> There can be equal political fanaticism among those determined to safeguard their own privileges. It is enough to recall the ruthless opposition to the Factory Acts, the Child Labour Acts, and the Old Age Pensions.

<sup>2</sup> Read in this connection: *Juvenile Delinquency*, by H. Bagot, London, 1941; *The Young Delinquent*, by C. Burt, London, 1944; *The Psychoanalytical Approach to Juvenile Delinquency*, by Kate Friedlander, London, 1947; *Young Offenders*, by A. M. Carr-Saunders, H. Mannheim, E. C. Rhodes, Cambridge, 1942.

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It would be wrong, however, to claim—as is so often done by politicians with a predominantly intellectual background—that all industrial work is uninspiring or hateful. To those brought up from childhood in an atmosphere of machine-adoration, an automobile garage, a wireless factory, or any other works in which ‘mechanical wonders’ are being produced, is as exhilarating as fields and forests to a poet, or the sight of a piano to a composer.

A young mechanic who delivered my car from the repair garage came into my study. For several seconds he looked at the books, the papers, and the typewriter, then he said: ‘I would rather be dead than spend all my life among them books, and doing nothing but writing.’ For him, if there had to be work, it must be enriched by spanners and blowlamps, the clatter of machinery, and the noise of company. Only the high-brow imagines that purely individual and creative work is the only satisfactory kind. Any kind of work has its appeal to certain people, whether it be catching rats or digging graves. Taking a nation’s jobs and professions in their entirety—those of taxi driver, dress designer, greengrocer, printer, farmer, fisherman, nurse, steeplejack, cinema usherette, commercial traveller, cement-mixer, saxophone player, miner, probation officer—we find that the exclusively automatic jobs from which even a machine-minded person can derive no satisfaction form only a minority.

But can we judge even the dullest, most automatic kind of work merely from the point of view of those who like their work to be exhilarating and creative? Most people engaged on purely automatic work, such as modern industry creates, follow it without enthusiasm or thought. Their zest for life is saved up for their leisure. Whatever the effects of their mental vacuity and wishdreaming may be, they themselves seldom regard their work as hateful. The very opposite is far nearer the truth: for when given the opportunity to change their work for something more interesting, demanding greater initiative and bringing in higher wages, they usually refuse.

When the late Henry Ford investigated the effects of repetitive, dull work on production, he discovered to his surprise that

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only a tiny proportion of his thousands of workers wished to accept his offer to vary their job and 'improve' themselves. They wanted neither the variety nor the responsibility that went with a less automatic job. Practically any manager of an industrial works can tell of similar experiences. The majority of workmen refuse to take a foreman's job, just as most clerks refuse to take managerial posts. During the last war men in the forces almost had to be forced to accept promotion to corporal or sergeant rank. They preferred the routine of their less interesting jobs to the responsibility and the relative segregation from their mates that the new rank would demand of them.

Whether work be interesting or dull, we have ceased to regard it as a friend, and are inclined to treat it as an unwelcome companion with whom we have to bear. This attitude is particularly noticeable among the young—perhaps because they respond more readily to the prevalent propaganda that depicts leisure as the one great prize to strive for. So work is for them an infringement upon their right to 'happiness'. It is something to be got over as quickly as possible, and, once done with, to forget. This attitude is by no means confined to factory workers with dull routine jobs, but exists equally among workers with more inspiring jobs: for it is not the particular type of work to which they object, but work as such, any work.

This animosity towards work is naturally reflected in a man's attitude towards his fellow-men. The same person who at his office or factory moves about with a pinched expression, cheerless and unfriendly, will be the gayest and most sociable companion when met at the pub, on the tennis court, or anywhere else where he spends his leisure. He is almost a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde—the one moved by an ill-disguised animosity towards the world, the other eager to make the best of every moment at his disposal. In his work-mates he instantly spots and comments on any blemish; away from his work he is prepared to see nothing but the best in his fellows. It is neither the nature of his work nor an innate unloveliness of his colleagues that causes his ill-repressed antagonism. It is merely his attitude

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of mind. But a man's attitude of mind is what matters more than the dictates of logic, in his relations with others.

. . . . .

In the days when no rift existed between a man's attitude to his work and his leisure, and he took real pride in his job, the latter left its imprint upon his entire personality. By the way he talked, moved his hands, looked at things, you could almost tell whether he was a mason or a weaver, a carpenter, printer or merchant. Today only a few professions leave such unmistakable signs upon those who perform them: fishermen, farmers, jockeys, and others whose job demands the whole of their personality, and a skill that is not acquired overnight. For so many others, unless they have been exceptionally successful in their profession, seem almost ashamed of their work, and would resent this type of permanent 'badge'.

The chief cause of the prevailing animosity towards work was the Industrial Revolution with all its effects of long hours, bad working conditions, and the ruthless exploitation of the labourer. Today such causes no longer prevail, but the memory of them, and the fashionable gospel of leisure, make people regard work as something either inimical to their wellbeing, or of secondary importance.

Yet work is as inescapably a part of life as food, love, sex, any of the fundamental things without which man cannot exist. Even in the perfect utopia of the future some people will have to erect the ideal houses for others to live in, paint the beautiful pictures to adorn them, and produce the glittering cars, refrigerators, wireless sets and so forth without which the utopian is bound to feel cheated. So even in utopia work will form an integral part of existence. And this is indeed a blessing, for only in work does the average man find opportunities for developing his skill, perfecting his mind and limbs, and giving rein to his creative urge.

It is a comparatively recent tendency to represent work as the enemy of leisure. In England it needed the full weight of the economic crisis of 1947 to make the 'leisure-gospellers' change their tune. Work in the coal mines, which only a few years



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previously they were wont to describe as below the dignity of a human being, suddenly was hailed by them as one of the noblest occupations, and the miners as the 'aristocrats of labour' which indeed they always were.

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It would be hard to deny that among the Northern nations (those where climatic conditions do not ruthlessly restrict a man's capacity for work), the English have become one of the least industrious ones. In the average Englishman's mind the idea of leisure dominates the notion of work.

There are good reasons for such an attitude. For several generations Britain was the richest country in the world and the centre of a vast Empire; and her semi-feudal system had to some extent survived even the Industrial Revolution. The standards and ideals of the leading classes were regarded as desirable by even the less privileged ones. Yet they considered work as something below their dignity. Unlike his counterpart in the United States of America, a young man did not make it his ideal to improve himself through hard work and to build up, and later to enlarge, his own business; his ideal was to become a 'gentleman'. This usually meant the enjoyment of a leisurely life divided between sports, the countryside, social activities and occasional politics. In England work never was 'glamorized', never painted in the alluring colours of the American luxury magazine.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> An interesting letter in *The Times* of Oct. 15th 1947, summarizes the differences of outlook most clearly. 'An industrial career in America is not *déclassé*', the writer states; 'to work at the bench or be on the road as a salesman is a fitting climax to a "college education"'. In England a man who makes good in trade or industry strives to send his sons to a public school and then to Oxford or Cambridge. . . . The sons too often aim for genteel professions, and the father has no one to follow him. In America . . . the successful university student is attracted to industry, not repelled by it. His college magazine reports his progress up the business ladder as faithfully as our own report commissions in the Army or promotions in the church. . . . Or compare the roles in our two countries of the average newspaper industrial correspondent. In this country he too often dwells on the negatives to the exclusion of all else; on strikes, lock-outs, controls, restrictions. . . . His opposite number in the States reports on progress, inventions, patents and products.'

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In Russia, too, work, the workman and his different achievements and records are idolized and glamorized, whereas in Britain a considerable section of periodicals still pays weekly homage to the leisure of the privileged few—hunting and dancing, steeplechasing and first-nighting, cocktailing and week-ending.

It would be wrong, however, to decry the modern worship of leisure and corresponding disrespect for work as an exclusively British article. It is the product of a civilization increasingly divorced from the fundamentals of existence and only too eager to sacrifice the best for the sake of the second best. Hence the tendency to regard leisure as an end in itself and not as complementary to work. The joys and achievements of a job well done cannot be replaced by the joys of leisure, nor be handed out like a bonus by outside authority. They must be striven for in an individual effort and backed by pleasure and pride in the job in hand. Only then can work illumine a man's personality instead of overshadowing it, and vitalize human relations. And only then does leisure fall into its right place. Leisure is desirable, necessary and eminently helpful. But only if it is earned, and if it is not regarded as more important than work.

### IV

## INDIVIDUAL EFFORT AND DECENTRALIZATION

The workman himself cannot regain a sound attitude towards work if the general conditions are antagonistic, and give him no assistance. One of the first conditions for such assistance is encouragement of personal initiative and the sense of personal responsibility. In this respect, as in so many others, the Athenians were wiser than ourselves. Even under Pericles the all-powerful State abstained from interference with private enterprise. As Pericles said: 'We give free play to all in our public life, and carry the same spirit into our daily relations with one another.' (Quoted by Alfred Zimmern, *op. cit.* p. 284.)

Even those who are wont to back their totalitarian visions by quoting Plato's Republic easily forget that with increase of

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knowledge and experience Greek economic life moved in exactly the opposite direction from our own: from the early 'communist' sharing of property to the legislation of Solon who withdrew more and more of the traditional fetters that interfered with the free exercise of individual effort. Did such a policy lead to greater economic injustice, greed and selfishness? Nothing of the sort. In practical terms the new policy meant that the individual business man had more at his disposal to pass on to the State. Two hundred years after the introduction of Solon's 'individualistic' legislation, Thucydides could still write of the enterprising Athenian business man: 'their only idea of a holiday is to do their duty, and they are sorrier for themselves for being out of public life than over the most laborious private enterprise.'

But why, we may ask with justifiable surprise, should so desirable a state have been possible? Because, when all is said, it was not economics—state-controlled or individualistic—that formed the basis of Athenian life, but something less circumscribed. That something was a philosophy of citizenship that was not exclusively political, social or economic, but was primarily concerned with the more permanent values of life.

Government *ukases* affecting economic life cannot achieve much to improve decisively something as personal and intimate as human relations. But there is one other aspect of the interplay between those relations and economics where reforms from outside can be of benefit. I am referring to the growing tendency towards centralization. Centralization, whether economic or social, has the most unfavourable effects upon human relations. Vast assemblies of men, compelled to work, think, and behave alike, finally degenerate into ant heaps. Modern industrial life not only encourages their formation but makes them inevitable. For, besides considering the human element as of secondary importance, it claims that its own efficiency depends upon centralization. Yet what is wanted are small communities established preferably in areas in which industrial and agricultural activities can be combined. It is quite untrue that many

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of the industrial goods required by modern man cannot be produced locally within small industrial units. 'There are no modern machines or processes of real or potential value to the human race which do not lend themselves . . . to small-scale qualitative production for local need.' (L. T. C. Rolt in *High Horse Riderless*, Allen and Unwin.) And, in agreement with this opinion, Julian Huxley states, 'If inventors and technicians so chose they could just as well apply the results of pure science for the purpose of increasing the economic self-sufficiency of small owners . . . concerned not with mass-distribution, but with subsistence and the supply of a local market'. (*Science, Liberty and Peace*, Chatto and Windus.)

Why is the small community preferable to the large ant heap? Because only there can the individual find opportunities for the personal note and the exercise of his initiative. Only in small communities can local pride be born, and effort find the individual reward that is so essential if man is to regain his dignity as a human being. Equally, personal responsibility can be fostered only within a comparatively small unit. Education, family life, culture and social intercourse, would all profit, as in the mass-community they suffer.

### V

## SECURITY: ECONOMIC OR SPIRITUAL?

But all reforms from outside, desirable though they may be, are only palliatives. Nothing but an inner, that is, spiritual reform can free us from the tyranny of economics. We find the focus of that tyranny in the problem of economic security. For not wealth but economic security is the opposite of poverty. It is economic security and not riches that most ordinary folk are hankering after. Even the young man without exaggerated ambitions strives for it: first for himself, then for his wife and children. A permanent job less remunerative is usually preferred to a more lucrative one without assurance of permanence; one entailing a pension, to one without it. To attain economic security a man will do almost anything short of committing crime. Often have deep-rooted principles been sacrificed for its sake.

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In examining the problem of economic security it is most important to differentiate between the young and the not-so-young. For upon each of these two groups the problem has a different bearing. Does economic security when you are still young really represent an ideal worthy of being placed above all others? Hypnotized by its advantages, we entirely forget that it may have disadvantages as well.

Even without exclaiming with Shakespeare that 'security is mortal's chiefest enemy' (*Macbeth*), we all know that in youth the possession of economic security easily thwarts initiative, enterprise, and the spirit of adventure. While the worries imposed by poverty may prevent a man from concentrating on his ideas or putting them into effect, a man economically secure easily loses the very ideas themselves.

Uncertainty is the salt of most achievements. If the inventor knew from the very outset that his theories were right and required no testing by trial and error, most of his inventive zest would probably desert him. In all exploration—in science, art, daily life, or love—it is the element of insecurity which awakens our best faculties, whether of will, intellect or instinct. If throughout history men had lived in economic security, it is doubtful whether civilization would have progressed much.

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As a rule, once a man has passed middle age, his spirit of enterprise is no longer sufficiently strong to compensate for his lack of economic security. In his case such a security will be justified. It is less so in the case of younger men in whom insecurity will evoke ingenuity, industry, and persistence. Indeed you will rarely fail to notice the difference between a young man whose material status is assured, and one who still has to strive for it. The latter will be lively, expectant, open to new ideas, energetic and a realist; the former, though more placid and self-assured, may easily strike you as a dullard, fond of the dogmatism so common among people separated from the cruder realities of life.

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The most important aspect of the problem of personal security—as indeed of all personal problems—is the spiritual one. Put into a nutshell, this means that spiritual security is of greater importance than its material counterpart.

Spiritual security can naturally be attained only by those who are inspired by a faith in the spiritual verities of life. Though in theory such a faith can exist without belief in God, in practice the two usually go together.

For people who genuinely believe in God, it is beyond doubt that one of his purposes is the wellbeing (and not the misery) of man. The words of the gospel ‘and everything else shall be added unto thee’ provide such people with a practical philosophy for daily living. They will know that though God helps only those who help themselves, He nevertheless is there to assist them when all their own efforts have failed.

When, upon failure, the nonbeliever is assailed by despondency and fear, he has no resources to fall back upon. In consequence he sinks ever more deeply into a state that makes new efforts on his part increasingly difficult. In a similar condition the believer is still sustained by his faith. It provides him with added resources of strength, the most notable of which are hope and courage to struggle on. But his faith also produces deeper effects, placing at his disposal means for ‘provoking’ divine assistance. It is in the very nature of our relationship with God that everything resulting from it is centred in our faith. Faith is the miraculous key that sets the entire mechanism of the man-God relationship in action. Thus a manifestation of divine assistance, too, depends upon it. Naturally such assistance is not limited to believers alone. But when the nonbeliever benefits from it, he regards it as accidental, as a piece of ‘unexpected good luck’. It has no place in his philosophy of life, and thus cannot be approached by him purposefully. For the believer it is a fundamental part of his philosophy, in fact, one of the corner stones of his sense of security. It is obvious therefore that such a security will be to him infinitely more worthwhile than any amount of material security. It is the only security that is unassailable from outside. For it represents a condition (or a state) that is beyond the reach of management,

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trades union or any other worldly authority. Economic 'security', on the other hand, is always built upon shifting sands: a monetary inflation, an economic depression and unemployment, war, social upheaval, practically any storm, can blow it away overnight.

Once a man has attained spiritual security, his inner subservience to the dictates of economics ceases, and he can regain (at least a certain measure of) personal freedom. Unlike the man in a safe job with prospects of a pension, he is not self-complacent but serene; not separated from the urgency of life but part of it; and, thus, not a theorist but a realist. Unlike the man who still strives for material security, he is not swayed and troubled by every change in the prevailing economic situation, but can meet it calmly: if the management, the stock exchange, the Ministry of Labour, or the Government cannot provide, God will, is his motto. Obviously his mind will not circle constantly round money and what the French call '*les affaires*', and he will be less given to envy, jealousy or greed. Thus in the long run human relations profit less by economic security than by security of the spirit.

PART IV

CULTURE AND LEISURE





## CHAPTER I

### LITERATURE

Our host was one of England's most successful novelists. I knew him only slightly, and it was by the merest chance that he had invited me. For it happened that a fellow-guest, whose family and mine had once been on friendly terms, expressed the wish to renew our acquaintance during a brief visit to England. I felt flattered, I must confess. For the skinny, curly-haired boy some years older than myself, with whom I used to play on one of the Continental beaches before the first World War, had become one of the most distinguished *hommes de lettres* in France, and almost as famous in England and the U.S.A. As the acknowledged leader of a very influential intellectual movement, he had interests far beyond literature, and could rightly claim to be *quelqu'un* in the worlds of letters and of thought.

I suspected that even our famous host felt pleased to have secured M. Blanc<sup>1</sup> for the occasion. Dinner showed few, if any, of the common post-war restrictions, and the choicest delicacies that had reached our host in gift-parcels from admirers overseas had found their way to our table as easily as had the best Sauterne, champagne and brandy that he had guarded jealously since pre-war days.

Even the guest of honour, used to the higher gastronomic standards of France, seemed impressed. Perhaps he was thinking of the fare with which he had been regaled during his year in a German concentration camp? Anyhow, his presence, the food, and the exceptional occasion, combined to make the dinner something of a festivity.

Our host, who normally was given to slightly cynical and deliberately non-high-brow talk, in which travel, personalities and money predominated over the things of the mind, permitted himself those un-English literary generalities in which, I suspected, he would hardly have indulged under less

<sup>1</sup> The name is fictitious.

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exceptional circumstances. He probably felt that it was his duty to do so in front of a guest to whom literature was more than a profession, and in whose native land intellectual conversation was considered one of the true spices of life. Probably, also, because he knew that continental writers were wont to accuse their British colleagues of caring more for being gentlemen than for their intellectual status, he went out of his way to defend the cause of literature and to emphasize its importance. But he also knew—everyone did who had read M. Blanc's latest books—that the war had made his foreign guest highly sceptical of purely intellectual values. So he waxed more enthusiastic than he no doubt would have done had we all been British. And since he was no fool, what he said, though not very original, was not insignificant.

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'To me', our host said (and I condense his main points into one or two monologues, even though they were not given in so set a form), 'the chief value of literary creation—and I am referring chiefly to fiction—is that it makes articulate what formerly the reader had felt only dimly. He has certain feelings about things or people, but cannot put his finger on them or define them, and moves as though through a perpetual fog. Then a writer comes along, and, as if by magic, everything the reader had been sensing vaguely is condensed into a few symbols. You agree, don't you, that writing is nothing but the creation of recognizable symbols? Suddenly the reader understands why people behave as they do, what motives move them, why certain things happen to them. By making a reader understand both the causes and the meaning of human relations, literature enables him to gain a deeper understanding of all life. If the author is a poet as well, he reveals to the reader even more than the inside of human beings and the significance of events. He reveals the very essence of life—a thing that cannot be done by any other means. In a few lines a Shakespeare, a Keats, expresses a mysterious truth that otherwise it would take days to explain.'

Turning direct to his distinguished guest, our host said more

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emphatically: 'You must admit, my dear Blanc, that nothing so deepens our understanding of life, as literature. No, not merely deepens it. The scientist and philosopher, too, can do that. Literature alone does it with fervour and with beauty, and adds intense personal enjoyment to instruction.'

'Would you then go so far', I ventured to ask, 'as to say that literature offers people not only escape but help in their human problems?'

'Most decidedly,' our host answered without a moment's hesitation. 'By making the reader see clearly what the motives of men and women are, how they react to passion—love or hatred—the author clarifies their understanding. And greater understanding always leads to greater tolerance. So long as I don't know why a friend is unpleasant to me, why my wife seems irritated by everything I say, I nurse a grudge against them. The moment I understand their motives, I find not only explanations but also excuses for them. What formerly hurt me now loses its sting. At the same time, that which formerly made me self-righteous and intolerant, now makes me forgiving. And isn't this half the battle in human relations? After all, literature is life or, if you wish, the world, condensed to a microcosm from which everything that is irrelevant or ambiguous has been distilled away by the author's art. What in the world at large is complex and muddled, is translated into clear pictures, reduced almost to a formula. Oh, don't be alarmed at the word formula—it is a formula as beautiful and exciting as life itself, even more so, when you think of Tolstoy, Flaubert or Proust. Surely, you agree,' and he turned to our French companion.

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M. Blanc did not reply at once. Our meal having come to an end, he had lit a cigarette and now he kept sucking at it with the sensual abandon which only Latin people seem able to expend upon that object. Though he knew English perfectly—he had even translated several English 'classics'—he preferred to use French. When he began to speak, his voice sounded exceedingly polite, but I imagined I could detect the faintest

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irony in his screwed-up eyes. 'So you consider, *Monsieur*', he said, 'that a writer writes for the reader—to teach or help people who haven't the slightest desire to know more than whether in the last chapter Annette will consent to "*se coucher avec Pierre*"? As an author I don't care a damn about the reader. *Je m'en fiche.*'

Our host was evidently taken by surprise, but only for a second or two. 'I hadn't finished what I was going to say', he said, rather less emphatically than before. 'Of course, the reader represents only one half of the problem. I entirely agree, my dear Blanc, that the author is more important and that the writing of a book cannot mean half as much to anyone as to himself. In writing his book the author clears his thoughts and his vision of the universe even more than does the reader when reading it.' He relit his cigar that had gone out, and during that interval was presumably collecting his thoughts. Then he went on, 'I find that only when I am at my writing-table trying to discover the true motives for the actions of my characters, do I begin to understand the motives for my own actions and behaviour. Why?' he paused rhetorically for a moment. 'Probably because I never think with such concentration as I do when I am at my work. And without deep thought, without what you French call *réflexion*, it is impossible to understand oneself. By analysing the characters and motives of our fictitious characters, we involuntarily begin to psychoanalyse ourselves and to look below the surface of appearances.'

Since M. Blanc remained silent, I felt it was my duty to come to our host's assistance. 'So in your opinion', I said, avoiding looking at M. Blanc, 'literature can make both author and reader more truthful or, to put it differently, more keenly aware of truth?'

"I have not the slightest doubt that it can do that. And that's precisely why it has always exercised such an enormous influence. You do agree, Blanc, don't you, that literature has affected society and humanized our entire civilization quite as much as religion has done?"

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Before M. Blanc replied, he lit another cigarette and then took a sip from his brandy glass. 'I do not disagree, *mon cher collègue*', he said at long last, 'I only wonder. Has literature ever had the influence that a warrior, an orator, or a religious fanatic has had? Napoleon, Jaurès, John Wesley, Karl Marx, and during the war, your own great Churchill?' He raised his glass—barely one year had gone by since the end of the war, and in most continental countries Churchill still was revered as the main architect of victory—and though he did it with the simplicity of an utterly unconscious act, both our host and I must have felt that there was a hidden implication in his gesture, and we followed his example.

After we had replaced our glasses on the table, the Englishman said: 'Yet the influence of Marx was entirely through his books.'

'*Bien entendu*', M. Blanc admitted, 'but *Das Kapital* is not literature, not in the sense we are now considering; it is a political tract, like Rousseau or Macchiavelli or More's *Utopia*. But we are talking of *belles lettres*, and especially of fiction which, in your view, *mon cher Monsieur*, influences the public profoundly.' He paused for a while, but then half-raised himself in his chair, as if growing impatient, and when he resumed his argument his voice sounded not angry but more vigorous than it had done throughout the evening. 'I have often thought about this; what author hasn't? Why has fiction so little influence upon the public? At last I think I am beginning to see the reason. We writers are nothing but hacks', now his voice really was angry, 'worse than the most hidebound bourgeois. When the bourgeois slavishly cling to convention, they do it with a purpose—to appear respectable. Our servitude to convention has no purpose and is mere cowardice.'

Our host looked up as though to ask a question, but M. Blanc went on. 'What is most permanent and significant in everyone's life? The elopements, the *fracas*, the great *bouleversements* that you and I describe? *Pas du tout*. Life is like a necklace of countless little beads, with only a few large show-pieces among them. But it is not these show-pieces that make the necklace.'

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It is the hundreds of little beads that hold it together—minute gestures, an accent here and there, an emotion half expressed and even less understood, a furtive look, the way a candle dapples a girl's blue dress with sudden gold, and what this does to you and me—all insignificant little things, intangible and too tenuous to be put into words. What we describe in our books are the close-ups of the movies, life seen twice as large as reality, and expressed so crudely that even the semi-literate can understand it. No, we are hacks, dishwashers, but not writers . . .'

He fell silent again.

'You have spoken of conventions,' our host broke the silence. 'What did you mean?'

'*Voyons*. First the absurd literary conventions, and then the moral conventions. Take the good men and women in fiction, and in nine out of ten books you find they are nothing but good. In actual life even the very best are beset by uncharitable thoughts, lewd desires, bouts of greed, priggishness. Do you dare to give your "good" characters those failings? Of course you don't. You save up all that is bad for your unpleasant characters. Why? Because fiction writing is simplification, selection. Since you cannot write a novel of ten thousand pages, you select only those attributes that will render your characters convincing within the space of three hundred pages. By selection, which is the essence of fiction writing, you and I rob our books of truth.'

M. Blanc got up from his chair and began pacing the room. Then he stopped in front of me. 'And what about the moral conventions? What about all the difficult, unpleasant subjects which an author is too shy or too well-mannered to put between the covers of his novel? At least a quarter—no much more, much, much more—of our life is spent over things that we never dare to write about: our physiological processes with all their difficulties, fears, fascinations; women's menstruation and the thousands of things it does and means to her—do you ever write about that? And our digestion, and all that goes with it. And the long hours we spend in a solitary bed, our consciousness circling round and round influenza or

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that ache in our belly.<sup>1</sup> Then masturbation. I believe in your country it is even more common than in mine—I suppose we are greater realists than you. Nevertheless, what about the secret happiness, and shame, and fear and bad conscience? Does any novelist write about them?’ M. Blanc did not notice that our host was beginning to look uncomfortable. ‘And what about sex?’ he went on. ‘The pleasures that to normal men and women are of overwhelming importance and that occupy not merely their nights of love but suddenly descend upon them like locusts or rose-petals, while they are at their bench in a factory, at breakfast, or in a bus, in joyful, hungry or tormented thoughts. Thousands, millions of minutes in every life given to savouring the tautness of a breast, the quiver of a mouth, a warm thigh—yet hardly a word about it in our novels. “He took her into his arms and placed a passionate kiss on her lips”—that’s as far as you dare to go. And then you start your next chapter: “On the following morning they had toast and poached egg for breakfast.” What happened between the two chapters—the heavens of new experience, the sudden secrets and, possibly, agonies revealed to your hero and heroine—but, please, excuse me,’ he seemed to recall himself, ‘I am speaking as a Frenchman; in your country it may be different . . . Different? I doubt it. The animal and the angel are the same everywhere and carry no passports with them. Anyhow, in my country, whether people admit it or not,

<sup>1</sup> Evidently the late Virginia Woolf shared some of the speaker’s views. When a year or two after the above conversation had taken place I read her posthumous essays *The Moment*, I was surprised to find the following sentences: ‘Novels, one would have thought, would have been devoted to influenza. . . . But no; with a few exceptions . . . literature does its best to maintain that its concern is with the mind; that the body is a sheet of plain glass through which the soul looks straight and clear, and . . . is negligible and non-existent. On the contrary, the very opposite is true. All day, all night the body intervenes; blunts or sharpens, colours or discolours. . . . But of all this daily drama of the body there is no record. . . . Those great wars which the body wages with the mind a slave to it, in the solitude of the bedroom against the assault of fever or the oncome of melancholia, are neglected. Nor is the reason far to seek. To look these things squarely in the face would need the courage of a lion tamer; a reason rooted in the bowels of the earth’ (pp. 14–15).



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those *bouleversements*, *délices*, *ecstases* mean a tremendous lot to them. Yet neither you nor I, a Frenchman and by God's grace not a hypocrite, know how to write about them. And if we did, we wouldn't dare to.'

While listening to the speaker, I could not help thinking of the boredom with which in my youth I had waded through so many 'physiological' bogs and deserts in Rabelais and Barbusse, or of the infantile delight with which D. H. Lawrence let himself 'go' in *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. But I said nothing, for I suspected that M. Blanc was not thinking in terms of physiological catalogues nor in those of a schoolboy exalted by his discovery of sexual processes. He was quite obviously concerned with something far more significant and more subtle, something that concerned itself not with mere subject-matter, but with the problem of truth herself.

M. Blanc stopped for a brief moment to light a new cigarette, but then went on, 'Yes, there is of course the modern psychological, or rather, psychoanalytical novel, with its fleeting images, innuendoes, tenuous thought-processes. But it is a novel of weakness and escape—weakness in the face of the great challenges of life: heroism, faith, self-sacrifice; escape into sex, into the petty and trivial, or the sub-normal. Man is petty and obsessed by sex, but he is not necessarily sub-normal, and he is capable of the great and noble gesture and of heroism, without which his picture is incomplete and sub-human. And faith still has the power to move mountains—but you won't find it in the psychological novel, or if you do, it will be in some vague or exotic form that has little relation to the life as lived by the millions who read novels. Because man is alive, he is both petty and noble, sex-obsessed but also longing for God, a coward but, if need be, a hero, preoccupied with trivialities but also with the loftiest ideals. The novel of our grandfathers was apt to show only the one side of him, ours shows only the other. Neither they nor we have quite succeeded in producing the synthesis which alone could be an image of truth; and any approaches to such synthesis are all too often dismissed as "highbrow" or "abnormal" productions.'

M. Blanc now stopped in front of the table: '*Voilà, Messieurs*,

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these are my reasons why fiction has so limited an influence upon people. The reader finds therein no enlightenment upon some of the most vital things in his life. He approaches every new book in the silent hope that it may give him elucidation on what troubles him most. Instead he gets close-ups of simplified characters: as similar to real ones as is life in freedom compared to life in a German concentration camp; or he must content himself with literary experiments in psychoanalysis, or disproportionate doses of the trivial.'

He sat back in his chair. After a moment's tactful silence our host offered him some more brandy, and then began to tell us about his last week-end in the country.

## CHAPTER II

### ART

#### I

### THE AESTHETIC ADVENTURE

I was telling two friends of mine in London—husband and wife—of a man in Paris I used to know before the war. He was a highly respectable, very 'normal' man in his early fifties, and occupied a position of some importance in one of the Ministries. His work left him sufficient leisure for cultivating his passion for collecting. Yet he was not really a collector, did not regard himself as one, did not specialize in anything in particular, and was lacking the collector's peculiar attitude to works of art. In spite of this, everything in his two-room apartment, at the back of the Trocadero, reflected a superlative taste and more than mere aestheticism.

His large, three-windowed sitting-room served him also as his *cabinet de travail* and dining-room. It contained a miscellaneous collection of excellent pieces of furniture both French and foreign, good pictures, statues and *objets d'art*. It was not, however, the individual pieces that roused one's admiration, but the room itself: for it was a more perfect work of art than any of its contents. Each corner was a separate composition, the shapes, colours and materials of its various objects forming one perfect unit. Yet they all merged beautifully into a harmonious whole.

. . . . .

Though far from being a recluse, our collector—let us call him M. Renoir—enjoyed nothing more than his solitary hour each evening after his return from the Ministry. As soon as he had washed his hands and changed his formal clothes for more comfortable ones, he would go into his sitting-room

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(called, of course, *le salon*), and sit down on the sofa facing the marble-framed fireplace.

On the ends of the mantelshelf stood a plain Sung vase and a small female head by an unknown Greek sculptor. In the centre between them stood a Louis Quinze clock of rose-wood and bronze, and above it hung a small mirror in a Sienese frame.

For several minutes M. Renoir's eyes would rest on the Greek head, the light of the evening mellowing its contours with a silvery translucence: then on the simple but immaculate shape of the Chinese vase. Within a short while he would feel a wonderful peace permeate him, as though the sense of harmony that guided the potter's hand, and the contentment that must have filled the Greek sculptor when chiselling so matchless a face, had lived on through the centuries, and now flowed out of the porcelain and marble in which they had been caught.

When M. Renoir's eyes reached the clock in the rich gaiety of its adornment, he would instantly respond to its appeal, and feel exhilarated, almost revitalized. One day he told me that only savouring the bouquet of an exquisite wine would give him a similarly intense sense of pleasure, though that derived from contemplating his treasures was of course not limited to the senses, but went much deeper.

From the mantelpiece M. Renoir would turn one after another to the various pieces about him, and finally inhale the beauty of the room itself.

. . . . .

While his *salon* was M. Renoir's private and most intimate source of aesthetic enjoyment, it was by no means the only one. For having been born with a passion for beauty, and having had the good sense to cultivate it, he found means for satisfying it almost anywhere. The shape of a river bend, the gold of a street light reflected in the wet pavement, the spacing of windows in a well-designed building, the contrasts of colours in the dresses of children playing in the Luxembourg Gardens—any of these gave him an equally profound sense of

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contentment. What others sought in manufactured pleasures for which they had to pay, in drink, or in artificially provoked thrills, was his at every street corner.

. . . . .

The friends to whom I described M. Renoir were cultivated people. The husband, a barrister, was something of an expert on mediaeval English literature. His wife was a woman of taste, fond of the theatre and of visiting art exhibitions.

To my intense surprise they expressed neither admiration for, nor envy of, M. Renoir. The wife remarked that my French friend was 'evidently an effeminate sort of person'. The husband, more guarded in his language, limited himself to the more general observation that no one but a Latin could reach such a height of aestheticism as to view the world exclusively in aesthetic terms. Both my friends made me suspect that M. Renoir was not the sort of person whom they would have gone out of their way to cultivate. I did not pursue the subject any further; but I realized that their views touched a problem of fundamental significance: namely whether art and its enjoyment are aesthetic matters of no deep human portent.

## II

### ART'S CONTRIBUTION

What then is art? It is revelation of truth in its most concise and harmonious symbols. Those symbols may be limited to purely abstract combinations of forms and colours; or of forms alone (as in sculpture); they may serve a representational purpose; or, even, a utilitarian one (as e.g. in architecture, pottery, or the arts of the silversmith and the carpet-weaver).

It may be objected that to identify art with truth is estimating its value too highly, and that rather should we limit ourselves to defining art as representation through pattern. Such a definition would, however, exclude all great art, from the Acropolis to Michelangelo, and from a Chinese T'Ang statue to Giorgione, Rembrandt and Cézanne. For it is of the very essence of artistic genius to apprehend what is most significant, and thus truest,

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in a combination of shapes and colours, and to know how to translate that apprehension into concrete images.

But that is not all. The great artist's sensibility enables him also to express what is most significant in his own spiritual state, as evoked by a particular subject or pattern. In fact, he chooses his subject only because it happens to reflect most faithfully his particular spiritual state at a given moment. That state of his, and the object he chooses as a means for expressing it, are more than complementary to one another. They are two facets of the identical thing—one visible, the other invisible. The work he creates is a fusion of the two. Whether he paints a reclining nude, a battle scene, or a basket of apples, either of these is for him the focus (and symbol) of a certain inner vision of truth or, rather, the result of his struggle for formulating it. He is limited in his choice of symbols—for how boundless is a spiritual vision as compared to concrete objects—and has to rely upon a nude, a few apples, or a tree. But that limitation forces him to extract from the chosen object what is most significant in it and what most faithfully expresses his spiritual condition of the moment. If he is a great artist, he will submit himself to that compulsion willingly. As a result he produces a description of both the outside object and of his own state. But he will produce something more as well, namely a symbol (or distillation) of both. And his symbol will contain the spiritual essence of what he depicted, and not merely what is accidental in a particular tree or apple.

Leonardo's *Gioconda*, a slave by Michelangelo, Van Gogh's chair, Rembrandt's self-portrait, are so obviously something more than what they merely represent—a face, a nude or a piece of furniture—that even the layman beholds them in a state of awe, as though suddenly he looked more deeply into life than ever before.

That is indeed one of art's supreme achievements: it enables us to see truth more deeply than we normally do. But that is not all. Because it reveals truth to us in concrete symbols, it reveals it to us with greater clarity than could be obtained by any other method. And since the symbols are aesthetically perfect, it fills us with a sense of delight that only beauty

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can evoke. Why should it have this last effect? Because successful arrangements of forms and colours have, as such, an exhilarating effect upon mind and emotions. We may not agree in our individual assessments of what constitutes beauty. But whichever combinations of colours and forms happen to represent beauty to us, evoke pleasure and heighten our sense of awareness. Under the influence of beauty, both our mind and our senses become more alive. It is, therefore, true to say that, while conveying to us both truth and beauty, art gives us a deeper awareness of life, and at the same time makes us happier.

A first-rate book on philosophy may reveal to us the profoundest truths; but it will not give us the same delight as a great painting or piece of sculpture. Even if such a book happens to be great literature as well (e.g. Plato's *Symposium*), it will delight our mind alone. The work of art speaks to both our intellect and our senses. So its appeal is bound to be more direct and more satisfactory than that of the written word. (I am obviously only referring to people who possess enough aesthetic sensibility to respond to the evocative power of shapes and colours. But a corresponding limitation has to be made in the case of those who derive contentment from reading: only those are in the requisite condition, who are not illiterate, and have sufficiently trained minds to follow the thought of the author.)

A stirring of the mind need not necessarily be conveyed to the emotions, and thus be reflected in our relations with our fellows. When the senses are touched, the emotions, too, respond. And anything that affects mind, senses and emotions—as art can—is bound to influence such relations.

. . . . .

Not all nations respond to art with equal directness or sensitivity. Its sensuous appeal is stronger among Italians and French than the English; Arabs respond more easily to paintings than to statuary which is banned by their religion; primitive races are apt to react instantly to strong colours, but remain more or less indifferent to half-tones; and so forth. But, whatever their individual reactions, there are few (if any)

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nations—whether primitive or highly civilized—that are completely insensitive to one type of art or another.

Since it affects both mind and emotions, reveals truth and communicates beauty, art has the power to make a man both happier and wiser. It is, therefore, anything but trite to say that it has an ennobling effect. For it reveals to man that the world and the various objects that fill it are more beautiful and significant than they had appeared to him before its eye-opening effect. The same group of houses and railway-bridge that he has been passing for years, without noticing them, are revealed to him in a new light. Thanks to what art has taught him, he not only 'sees' them, but begins to understand why this grey building has always depressed him, that rising arch always given him a momentary sense of exhilaration. It needed a Maurice Utrillo to make us see and appreciate the beauty of dirty walls, brick factories, and the overcast wintry skies in the less spectacular streets of Paris; just as Rembrandt has helped us to find beauty in the shrivelled face of an old beggar. Because the artist had extracted from his subject its very essence, some of the subject's significance communicates itself to the spectator. Impressions that formerly were vague and meaningless, now are charged with an order that evokes both comprehension and contentment.

To see clearly and to distinguish what is significant in the surrounding world, helps us to do the same in relation to human beings. It would require complete lack of artistic sensibility to spend an hour in the Sistina Chapel or in front of the Medici tombs at San Lorenzo, and emerge from either in the same mood of irritability and fault-finding in which we may have entered. The serenity engendered by a Vermeer or Watteau is bound to be reflected in our attitude to others. Speaking of some artistic events, E. M. Forster once wrote: 'They are a light in the world's darkness, raised high above hatred and poverty. Despite their greatness and our smallness, they have the power of making us feel great. Half an hour later we feel small, but the extension has been made' (*Sunday Times*, August 31, 1947). It is, of course, up to ourselves not to let such effects evaporate instantly, but to cultivate them and their causes.



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### III

#### INTEGRATION OF ART AND LIFE

Even without Mr. Forster's wise words and the encouraging example of M. Renoir, everyone who has experienced the strange power exercised by a great painting or a statue—not to speak of such marvels as Chartres Cathedral or the Temple of Heaven in Peking—knows that art has the faculty of 'extending' us. And yet my two friends in London considered that a man for whom that truth had become everyday experience was 'effeminate' and a mere 'aesthete'. As I said before, they were not philistines, and the wife visited art galleries and exhibitions, and listened enraptured to the lectures of Mr. Roger Fry. How then can we reconcile their attitude and what we know to be true about art?

Evidently, for my London friends art was a sort of veneer or, to put it differently, a respectable form of entertainment. As such, it was nobler than dog-racing or the movies; yet, fundamentally, it must have belonged to the same category. For M. Renoir, on the other hand, art went deeper than any veneer, and was less evanescent than any type of 'entertainment' could ever be. For entertainment suggests something added to daily life from outside. For him such duality did not exist, and life and art had become one.

It may possibly help us if for a moment we leave both M. Renoir and our friends in London, and cast a backward glance across the centuries to the Renaissance and the Middle Ages. There is no need to idealize the Middle Ages, or to deny that the great majority of people in those days were illiterate, led unhygienic lives, took no baths, had disgusting table manners and, altogether, were far inferior to us. We must, however, admit that the houses in which they lived, though ill-ventilated, hot in the summer and cold in the winter, were not jerry-built, and expressed the artistic individuality of their builders, of architect, mason or carpenter; that the furniture, the mugs and oil lamps they used were made by craftsmen who took great pride in their craft and aimed wholeheartedly at

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producing objects as handsome as their purpose demanded; that the walls and arches, the statues and pews of the churches in which they worshipped were fashioned by their own fathers, brothers, sons, or themselves; in short, that the uncouth citizens could not help being more deeply impregnated with art than are those of us who write eulogies of Picasso and fill our bookshelves with monographs on art. Art formed as much part of their daily lives as did their work, their meals, their religion, and their love-making. It was neither a veneer nor an entertainment superimposed upon their workaday activities. They may not have been conscious of this—and in the Middle Ages certainly were not—but their ways and desires were moulded by their intimacy with art. So art was not for them something aesthetic, but as natural and necessary to their wellbeing as were the tools of their trade.

. . . . .

Can our Arts Councils, travelling exhibitions, and other instruments of art education, create a similar attitude in twentieth-century Britons? In France and Italy, too, a great deal of life has been industrialized. But the French and the Italians are not afraid nor ashamed to approach life sensuously. They even delight in doing this. Moreover, their thirst for beauty is stronger than ours, so art can still enrich their lives. The citizen of Florence crossing the Piazza della Signoria is more conscious of the beauty surrounding him than is a Londoner passing a Wren church.

Art Councils, exhibitions, and their like all have their uses. But it is beyond them to integrate art fully into life. Let us admit the melancholy fact that art has become for us something extraneous to our routine existence, a Sunday affair. Even the very best in furniture, rugs, cups, or candlesticks, however desirable in themselves, will not necessarily improve the taste of the masses, or increase their desire for beauty.

They will buy the well-designed pots and armchairs because these, and not shoddy ones, will be on the market. But does this mean that they will really prefer them to the shoddy ones? Or that they will learn from them to appreciate beauty? The

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well-designed house, coffee-jug, or poster, is important, but only secondary. All the privileges of culture that my two London friends enjoyed had not succeeded in integrating art into their lives. We can speak of such integration only when our sense of awareness and happiness is awakened not merely by a beautiful picture, but at every street corner, and when such awakening permeates our whole being—senses, emotions, and mind—and not merely our aesthetic faculties.

. . . . .

To create a living sense of art, we must do more than concentrate on art. Our entire sense of values must be revised. So long as we appraise life chiefly in terms of material success (and therefore, of money), there cannot possibly exist a genuine appreciation of things artistic. Art *qua* art cannot be assessed in terms of material profits; nor can its enjoyment be compared in its nature with such sensual pleasures as are derived from sex, drink or food; or with the pleasure afforded by such entertainments as playing bridge or watching football matches. Then we must ask ourselves whether a civilization that accepts only what materialistic science defines as 'real' can foster a genuine love for something as 'unprovable' as the value of art and its enjoyment.

Turning to our own country, can we expect an integration of art and life so long as (whether consciously or unconsciously) we let our Puritanical inhibitions condemn sensuous pleasure?

For if we pretend that the intellectual benefits of high art are the only ones worth having, we are missing half the glory. And if our capacities for worship and appreciation are dissipated on games (as players or spectators) and other alibis that prove our mistrust of cultural values, we are wilfully turning our backs on an incredibly rich heritage, and deliberately stultifying some of our finest faculties.

## CHAPTER III

# MUSIC

### I

## SOME EFFECTS OF MUSIC

A good statue or painting helps us both to clarify and concentrate our vision of some particular aspect of the world. Though they stir our emotions, they keep them within the bounds of what their individual character has evoked. Music, too, stirs our emotions: but the composer does not guide them exclusively to his own vision. Unwittingly, he encourages them to set off on their own errands. Unless the listener is musically highly trained, his emotions, responding to the stimulus administered by the composer, lose themselves in the fairyland of personal associations.

Herein lies the danger of music: it unlocks the dams of our emotions, but gives them a less clearly defined direction than the visual arts. It imposes upon the (average) listener no discipline, for it offers his emotions no precise focus outside himself, and easily leads to orgies of day dreaming.

(I am referring to people who, while not deaf to the appeal of music, have insufficient training to follow it on its own terms, that is, in accordance with its innate canons.)

Whereas, in our response to the visual arts, our intellect participates—however feebly—our reaction to music is usually wholly emotional. What has lain buried in the subconscious is stirred up; but the meaning of the released forces escapes the mind. We become aware, under the stimulus of music, of sentiments of which previously we hardly seemed capable, and feel elated or overpowered by them. We are then easily led to believe that we are pitched in a higher key than we had imagined, or are capable of living on a plane far above our normal one. In consequence, a false sense of perspective is

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created. Because we have been stirred deeply, that sense may persist long after we have ceased to listen to the composition responsible for it.

The case of Hitler, and the disastrous effects that listening to Wagner (emotionally the most dangerous composer imaginable) had on him, is not unique. Wagner made him feel 'profound' and 'mystical', and encouraged his belief in his messianic mission and the wisdom of even his most megalomaniac ideas. Wagner also fed the grandiloquence which Hitler was apt to identify with the capacity for heroic deeds. It is by no means accidental that the Führer was most loquacious and long-winded after listening to Wagner, or that he was as devoted to Wagner's wordiness as he was indifferent to the disciplined restraint of Bach.

## II

### MUSIC AND HUMAN RELATIONS

Because music so easily unlocks our emotions, it has the faculty of pulling down barriers between us and our fellows. The sense of 'overflowing' that it produces in us clamours for a sharing of impressions. Whereas the visual arts easily make us withdraw into ourselves, music, even when it does not stir us profoundly, is apt to stimulate what is companionable in us. Hence the age-old custom of musical entertainments at banquets and other social occasions, in continental cafés and, nowadays, through the medium of the radio-loudspeaker, even in English pubs.

But music can serve to knit human ties even more closely than it does on such 'social' occasions. In the folksong, the Negro spiritual, Russian or Welsh spontaneous choral singing, the marching songs of soldiers, the integration of music and the human link is so intimate that often it is hard to tell which is the outcome of the other. Many of those songs owe their existence to common labour, worship, dangers, or joys. Because being together and doing certain things together made the people feel contented or sad, they gave expression to the common mood through sounds (the only medium open to them

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while their bodies were occupied). Out of such sounds song was born. The more musical the particular group, the better the song. The cockney errand-boy may give vent to his mood in nothing better than an out-of-tune version of the latest 'song' number he has heard at the movies; but the Negro working in the cotton fields, the Welsh miner, or the Russian moujik harvesting the corn, often produce an original combination of sounds that shapes itself into a song.

I once spent a long time among the vine-pickers of French North Africa, and day after day I witnessed the fascinating process of how songs were born. One of the men—mostly vagrant Arabs and Berbers who migrated from the South for the vine harvest—would start humming to himself. Gradually his humming would turn into a loose, guttural song, but without words. By and by he would start adding words, one or two at a time, and then, perhaps, an entire sentence. He never seemed to take more than an hour to complete the song. He would repeat the little song several times—never twice entirely the same—till its main outline had evidently been grasped by his mates. (On a few occasions, his efforts were supported by one or two of the other men, who supplied a few words here, a fragment of a tune there. But, as a rule, it was the one labourer whose 'composition' they accepted.) First one, then a few more, would take up his song, and presently it would resound all over the vineyards. Though individual workers would introduce their own variations, on the whole the first man's song was the one they all sang. Sometimes it would be repeated on several consecutive days, but more often each day brought forth its own new song. Practically all the melodies were of a heart-breaking melancholy, more like the lament of a wounded beast than a song of men.

The dark-skinned vine-pickers provided an exceptionally illuminating example of perfect integration between men's intercourse with one another and their work on the one hand, and music on the other. Had anyone tried to prevent them from inventing and singing their songs, I have little doubt that they could not have done their work half as efficiently as they did while singing.

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In his play *The Living Corpse*, Tolstoy made his hero a Russian nobleman who forsakes his life of respectability and comfort for the sake of a singing gipsy girl and the gipsy music that she and her friends sing for him. Their songs—melancholy, wild, haunting, or gay in turn—become for him more important than wife and family and all the other solaces of a well-ordered life. For they are symbols of a freedom denied him by that life.

Like so many characters of Russian literature, Tolstoy's hero represents a case so extreme as to appear almost pathological in Western eyes. Yet does it really differ essentially from that of countless jazz devotees who under the impact of the saxophone seem to change their entire being? The mixture of the savage-primitive and the sophisticated in jazz stirs the emotions quite as violently as did Tolstoy's gipsy singers; moreover, it attacks the sexual susceptibilities as no gipsy music could do. Hence the almost hypnotic spell in which jazz holds the young who dance to it. They are transported into an entirely fictitious world of blue skies and tropical vegetation, of velvety caresses and naked emotions, a world that has next to nothing in common with the one they live in.

It is only natural that, with its strong evocative power, music should be able to awaken a creative imagination that otherwise might have remained dormant. Music has probably done more than any other single art to vivify and fertilize the creative impulse of man. For one Goethe who could derive his main inspiration from sculpture, there are a dozen authors who, like Tolstoy in his *Kreutzer Sonata*, derived it from music; or painters, who, like Rubens, found it easier to paint when they listened to music. And on the opposite side of the Hitler-Wagner misalliance we find the devotion of an Albert Einstein to his violin and to chamber music. Mathematicians and scientists in particular would seem to find music more helpful than any other art. Perhaps it is its emotional character and its very lack of intellectual precision (as compared with other arts) that offers them a desirable antidote to the intellectual self-discipline demanded by their own work.

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Like the great sculptor and painter, the great composer expresses his revelation of truth. His genius, like theirs, enables him to see truth more clearly than may the ordinary uninspired man. Since everything that brings us closer to truth makes better men of us, music, in spite of its dangers, must be considered as a major positive influence in human relations.



## CHAPTER IV

# THE THEATRE

The theatre combines the elements of literature and (to a lesser extent) of the visual arts, and is therefore subject to some of the laws and limitations that govern its sister-arts. But the theatre also utilizes visible actors and movement, carried out by real beings of flesh and blood. Above all, it has the support of the human voice.

Graced with so many advantages, the theatre should stir us more profoundly than any other art. Yet is this the case? The richness of its means makes also for complexity; and its complexity presents it with pitfalls from which it hardly ever escapes—the theatre of ancient Greece being one of the rare exceptions. However excellent the play, there are producers and actors, scene-painters and miscellaneous technicians to be taken into account, and each can rob it of its significance.

Even a producer would not deny that the theatre at its best, that is, the theatre that makes a distinctive contribution to culture, derives its main significance from the poetic language of the playwright, such language affecting the human soul more deeply than any other. In this connection the term poetic language does not necessarily denote verse. Whenever a playwright with an innate sense of words finds the right expression for his deepest emotions, or for something that has fertilized his imagination, we are entitled to speak of poetic language. What distinguishes it from the non-poetic language of the theatrical mere-craftsman is that it exists as if by its own right, and can carry the playwright's message more or less independent of the stage 'business' into which it becomes incorporated. We find such language not only in the great poetic dramas of the past but also in modern works of playwrights who express themselves in prose: in the elusive understatements of Jean Jacques Bernard and in some of the matter-of-fact dialogue of *Journey's End*, in the nostalgia of Czechov's Russians and the tortured

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pronouncements of Eugene O'Neill's Americans; in Bernard Shaw's *St. Joan*, and in a great deal of Ibsen.

In spite of the superlative importance of poetic language, producers are apt to concentrate their love and attention—not to speak of the vast sums of money provided by their backers—upon scenery, costumes, lights, and all the other paraphernalia of the modern theatre. They seem utterly unaware—and in view of the oceans of ink expended on this subject, their unawareness would seem to be cultivated—that in nine cases out of ten their passion for frills robs the works they 'produce' of what is their most precious treasure, namely the poetic image as enshrined in the playwright's language. It is this image alone that manifests the spiritual vision of Sophocles, Shakespeare, Racine, Calderon, or Goethe. And that vision is not identical with the humdrum vision produced by scenery and costumes. Often, it is opposed to it. Even the most ingenious stage-electrician cannot produce the magic of words as simple as 'How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank'. All he can achieve is the distraction of our attention from the evocative power of those words by substituting for them something forgotten as soon as it has been seen. Can even the most brilliant producer with the help of all his stage designers and lighting experts create the effect effortlessly produced by ten monosyllabic words: 'The moon is up and yet it is not night'?

Let the producer and his army of technicians employ their coloured searchlights and amaranthine backcloths when they labour with plays unlit by sparks of poetic language and spiritual vision. Otherwise, they had better leave such play-things to an art that is much more expert in handling them, namely, the cinema.

For many centuries now the magic of Shakespeare's images, of Corneille's rhetoric, and Molière's wit, have moulded the sentiments, and even actions, of thousands of people. The cardboard fancies and magic lanterns of ambitious producers have not left their mark even upon a gallery mouse. It is of the very nature of the theatre—the world of illusion par excellence—and of poetic drama in particular, that 'life-like' décor or 'overdressing', destroy the truth that the author tried to create

## CULTURE AND LEISURE

by means of his own poetic illusion. His words are the winged symbols of that truth, more perfect than any other we can think of. Weigh them down with décor and stage 'business', and they are left with no air to breathe in.

'Very little furniture, extremely simple scenery . . . are the real accessories you need for Shakespeare', Theodore de Banville, that great stylist and man of the theatre, wrote eighty years ago in an extremely wise article. 'When Hamlet was played here, the drama was killed by pretentious scenery, by changes of scene . . . by the constant fall and rise of the curtain.' A more recent, but equally wise lover of the theatre in our own country, Maurice Baring, wrote: 'It is a tragic situation: all this trouble and expense, all the thousands of pounds spent on scenery . . . has killed the production of poetical drama . . . but it has never satisfied the patrons of the drama' (*Lost Lectures*, 1932).

The classical Greek theatre, the Miracle Plays of the Middle Ages, The Globe Theatre of the Elizabethans, which allowed 'the words to work their own magic without heavy-fisted attempts at realistic setting',<sup>1</sup> all achieved a maximum dramatic effect with the minimum of 'stagey' effort. And, as we know, the influence they exercised was far beyond anything our most ambitious producers have ever dreamed of.

When we come to the less exalted forms of the theatre, we naturally have to apply different standards. It would be foolish to claim the rights and privileges of poetic language for the language in which thrillers, musical comedies, melodramas, farces, and their like are written. All these achieve their effectiveness through a combination of factors in which the author and his language are only one among many and, often, of secondary importance. Without the support of the producer, stage designer, costumer, electrician and countless other technicians, they would be as sterile as a cabbage seed planted in the Sahara. But when we speak of the theatre as an important medium of culture, we do not consider in the first place those lower forms of entertainment: just as when we examine the

<sup>1</sup> Bernard Miles, in *The British Theatre* (Britain in Pictures), Collins.

## THE THEATRE

importance and influence of art, we do not turn to the oleographs that used to clutter the lounges of Victorian seaside hotels. All these 'lower' forms of theatrical entertainment are legitimate in that they satisfy an existing need. But we cannot apply their standards to the theatre at its noblest. We should be horrified if Marcel Proust or Henry James tried to 'enliven' their books by borrowing from the style or professional 'tricks' common among the authors of midwestern stories or of the penny dreadful.

No one would deny that even the poetic drama can profit from the arts of the producer and stage designer. We want to see Hamlet dressed like a Prince of Denmark, and the stage in *The Tempest* to suggest something better than the backyard of a London slum; and the aesthetically satisfying and purposeful grouping of actors will appeal more strongly to our imagination than one that is neither—always provided that those groupings, stage settings and costumes, overload neither the language of the playwright, nor the actor who has to transmit them to us, and thus do not stifle the very spirit of the play.

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To sum up: we have found that literature—especially in the realms of fiction—if it is to leave its full mark on human relations, must be outspoken and truthful; that art should be as fully as possible integrated with life; and, lastly, that superficial trappings must not rob the poetic drama of its rights. As in so many manifestations of modern life, it is our half-heartedness and preoccupation with non-essentials that prevent our fully enjoying the most precious fruits of human genius.

## CHAPTER V

# CONVERSATION

Unlike desultory conversation—almost as automatic an activity as breathing—purposeful conversation at its best can act as a cement, a spur, or a lubricant in human relations. All such conversation is symptomatic of some state of mind; a mirror as well as a motivator. It provides emotional release and intellectual stimulation; it creates or does away with difficulties; and furnishes keys to individualities and situations. It is in fact one of the principal vehicles of enlightenment and instruction.

Most Latins and Slavs would rather give up eating than occasions for common talk. Without conversation, the marketplace, the *piazza*, the café, or the barber's shop would not be what they are: stimulating, enlightening, often amusing, and always throbbing centres in which individual minds, emotions and idiosyncrasies can reveal themselves. Greek civilization without conversation is hardly thinkable: if for no other reason, because it would have been deprived of its outstanding figure, Socrates, and of the profound influence that he exercised over the thought of more than one civilization. Without conversation the Renaissance courts of the D'Estes or Medicis would have lacked one of their glories, and the later French salon its *raison d'être*. Without conversation our knowledge of Dr. Johnson (not to speak of Boswell or Mrs. Thrale) would be colourless. The English Club, nay, the very Mother of Parliaments, would hardly have seen the light of day, if vocal communication had by some mischance never been evolved to meet one of man's profoundest needs.

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Voltaire once said that conversation is the salt of human intercourse. Unfortunately, since his days some of that salt has lost its savour. More and more conversation has become the instrument for vocal day-dreaming, or for the expression of the

## CONVERSATION

more negative emotions. Like the day-dream, it is conducted without awareness, and permitted to jump irrelevantly from subject to subject, without any effort at reaching some conclusion. It is not a give and take but a loose string of brief soliloquies that call for no mental effort on the part of either speaker or listener.<sup>1</sup> It is apt to stimulate an inflated sense of criticism, envy and exhibitionism, and to encourage flippancy of thought. It easily destroys more than it creates, and cheapens whatever it touches. While either distorting truth or turning it into a joke, it presents half-truths as dogmas. Afraid equally of ideas as of intellectual argument—chief justification for serious conversation—it exhausts itself in sterile argument on ascertainable facts for which any encyclopaedia offers ready-made answer.

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There is no doubt that whatever the effects of the second World War may have been in other spheres of life, they were favourable to conversation. This would seem true of most of the belligerent countries, but particularly of Great Britain. Both during and after the war conditions in Britain were not propitious to the superficiality and facetiousness that flourished so profusely in English conversation between 1919 and 1939. Everyday-life and its problems became too exacting to permit of escapism. They had to be faced by everyone who wished to come to terms with them, and this meant trying to elucidate them. One of the best means for achieving such an aim was conversation. Another contributory factor was the post-war raising of cultural interests in Britain. Before the war many of the younger (and older) people were apt to consider preoccupation with, say, art or music as a sign of effeminacy or 'high-browism'. Post-war youth discovered the value of both art and music, and also of the ballet and of the more serious drama that found a new platform in innumerable experimental theatres throughout the country. What more natural than

<sup>1</sup> All the above characteristics are perfectly legitimate in small-talk, which not only has its uses but is indispensable in life. But it would be misleading to identify the pennies and half-pennies of small-talk with the pound notes of conversation.

## CULTURE AND LEISURE

that cultural themes came to occupy an important place in conversation? In fact the whole British nation became more serious-minded than it has been since the Edwardian era of opulence and superficiality. Political, economic, social, scientific problems that in the past preoccupied but a small minority, became of vital concern to the majority that tried to find enlightenment on them in conversation.

But, of course, even those higher standards of post-war conversation cannot entirely outbalance certain dangers inherent in conversation, for all nectar of conversation contains its drop of poison. 'Conversation takes the importance, the seriousness, and the truth out of everything', wrote Franz Kafka (quoted in Dr. Brod's *Life* of the great Czech writer). He may have added that it tends to dissipate creative energy.

If you want to prevent the execution of your most important scheme, there is nothing better you can do than talk about it. The more you do so the more certain you can be that when the moment for putting it into effect has come, little creative energy will be left. An important task calls for utmost concentration. The deeper you meditate and concentrate, the more do abstract ideas develop into practical schemes. It is of the very nature of talk to disturb concentration and cause mental dissipation. Each one of us has at his disposal only a certain limited amount of the creative energy essential for developing his ideas to their full maturity. The more of it he expends in conversation, the less is left for the task itself. It is as if a man determined to save all his money for building himself a house went about spending a shilling here and a shilling there on the bits and pieces that he hopes to enjoy in his house. Little will be left for the necessary bricks and mortar without which no house can be erected.

The only exception to this rule is when our motive for discussing our plans is the genuine need to elucidate these or to seek advice. But in either of these cases our talk is not really conversation: it is rather 'thinking aloud', or a means of garnering instruction. More frequently, however, we talk about our plans not so much to clarify our own ideas, and enrich them by contact with those of others, as for the sake of bragging or of

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deferring the dreaded necessity of getting down to the job in hand.

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Like so many of the factors in human relations so far discussed, conversation can achieve either such a constructive purpose or its reverse one. Which of the two will prevail depends upon whether we indulge in it unthinkingly and automatically, or treat it with that awareness and respect without which nothing worthwhile can be got out of human intercourse. In the former case we are the slaves of conversation and not its masters. It deteriorates to a sort of mental self-abuse, for which our automatism mobilizes our least desirable emotions.

Of course we cannot hope in our conversation to be always 'at concert pitch'—this would lead to unbearable sententiousness and boredom. But the man who understands and can practise the art of conversation has discovered one of the shortest and most delightful bridges that lead from man to man.



## CHAPTER VI

### THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE

From the cup in which we drink our morning tea, and the milk that goes with it, to the light we switch off before going to sleep, practically everything we touch or do has somehow or other had science brought to bear upon it. If science were but the handmaiden of our physical needs, all would be well and good. But for many people physical science has replaced religion, become more enthralling than anything other forms of culture have to offer, more interesting than Nature untampered with. People who, though not scientists themselves, do not mind spending hours fiddling with their radio set, never have time for even a short walk in the country; people whom Mozart and Jane Austen send to sleep are roused to ecstasy by the way this little wheel turns in a machine, or that piece of wire behaves when electric current is sent through it. If the Middle Ages paid their obeisance to religion, the Renaissance was the period of discovery, the eighteenth century that of reason, and the nineteenth of steam and the Industrial Revolution, ours is undoubtedly the age of science.

Naturally, we expect something that dominates our life in all its spheres to have a profound effect upon human relations, and to teach us new ways of solving the problems arising from them. Does science do that? By no means. It may have transformed our knowledge of the physical world, changed our language, simplified or complicated many of our actions. It may have done a thousand other things as well—some good, others evil—but it has done next to nothing to improve the fundamental problems of human relations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am obviously not referring to the budding 'sciences' of psychology and psychoanalysis, which, in the first place, are not 'physical' sciences. Moreover, much of the forms they begin to take suggests that one day they will openly revolt against the present domination of the physical sciences, and side with what is increasingly becoming the opposite to a 'scientific' conception of life,

## THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE

It may be retorted that human relations are not the sphere of physical science, and that it is unfair to accuse it of not accomplishing something that it has never set out to do. Such an objection is hardly justified. For if it were, it could equally be made in regard to a thousand other influences—from art to nature—whose purpose has little to do with human relations, and which yet influence them profoundly.

There is another aspect of the problem to be considered. In spite of its nature and purpose, physical science is encroaching upon many spheres of life extraneous to its aims, such as religion, for example. It is beside the point whether the blame for this has to be laid at the door of science or of people who condone or, even, encourage such encroachment. What matters is that science is, in some quarters, all but deified.

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By their very nature human relations deteriorate unless they are based on some spiritual postulates deeper and less transient than utilitarianism. By its very nature science is utilitarian. And spiritual postulates are not only ignored but denied by it. (The recent attempts on the part of a few individual scientists—the name of the late Arthur Eddington comes to mind—to introduce spiritual conceptions into the scientific *Weltanschauung*, are less than drops in an ocean. Anyhow, they usually stop at the incorporation of morality—an indispensable element in sound human relations.)<sup>1</sup>

Science as such does not recognize spiritual reality, either in the shape of the great religions, or in that of paranormal cognition as embodied in psychism, occultism and their many derivatives. The facts of Yoga mean as little to it as do Rudolf Steiner's revolutionary discoveries in the fields of medicine, chemistry, agriculture, or education. Because its only standards

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namely a spiritual one. Prof. C. G. Jung, after Freud the most creative among psychoanalysts, indicates clearly such an anti-materialistic tendency in psychological development.

<sup>1</sup> See in this connection the report of a conversation with Sir Arthur Eddington, in my *Love for a Country*, pp. 183-187.

## CULTURE AND LEISURE

are those of materialism, it inevitably induces the 'scientifically-minded' layman to abide exclusively by those standards. It is indifferent to the fact that in politics—to name but one sphere of human activity—this cannot but lead to a totalitarianism such as is known in Russia, where 'the national God is called technical achievement and science' (C. G. Jung) and where, in consequence, the *spiritual* dignity of man and his personal freedom are disregarded. Because it considers man as a physical machine, it leaves its followers in a moral and ethical vacuum. For it is incapable of providing them with guidance for anything that is not purely utilitarian. It can tell them nothing about what constitutes right or wrong, or what the aim of life is; nothing about the secrets of love, beauty or happiness; nothing about their future after death: in fact, nothing about any of the things that matter most to them.

At one time religion provided at least some of the answers to those questions. In consequence it gave man a certain measure of self-assurance and a sense of direction. While either denying or ridiculing those answers, science has put nothing in their place, and has thus condemned man to become more and more an automaton. But then, in the eyes of science the ideal man *would* have to be an automaton. For he alone could do everything according to a formula.

It would be childish to identify the moral cancer to which unwittingly science gives birth with the scientists themselves. Many of these are men ennobled by the highest possible ideals. This, however, does not exonerate science from its responsibility for having permitted utterly a-moral doctrines to dominate the lives of millions of people. (The situation is not dissimilar, though of a reverse order, to the one we find in religion. Because many official representatives of religion have misinterpreted and betrayed the gospel they preach, it does not follow that the gospel is wrong, or has lost any of its value.)

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Can the individual do anything to escape from the domination of science whenever it encroaches upon spheres of life that are not its own? The answer is implicit in the question. For

## THE INFLUENCE OF SCIENCE

all the dangers accruing from the a-moral attitude of science, it is not science that has forced the layman into adopting a corresponding attitude. He has done so of his own volition. He therefore must decide whether science is to be his master or his servant, and prevent it from replacing his spiritual ideals.

Morality is the fruit of the conflict between spirit and matter, and of the resulting effort to bring about a fusion of the two. So it is for the individual to attempt to bridge the gulf that separates science from morality, and to insist that no scientists be allowed to produce atom bombs, nor Governments (which are his representatives) to encourage scientific labours destined to bring about annihilation of all civilized existence. But, of course, we cannot put the clock back. There is no reverse process from a state of 'knowing' to a state of 'not knowing'. It will never again be possible to say that atomic destruction and its means can be forgotten. Having gone so far, we are in the desperate position where the thing we must desire is the scientist's discovery of a defence. For we have not lived sufficiently by faith and the moral principles that emerge from it to ignore the peril.

But let us go back to our main subject. By turning his present-day adoration of all things material (and mechanical) towards more human values, the individual can contribute greatly to ousting science from spheres to which it does not belong. The love of gadgets, the craze for speed, the worship of mechanical objects, have become a disrupting influence. They are fully capable of undermining every kind of human relationship. Man can find worthier objects of love and devotion than perishable little idols with knobs and cogs and wheels.

## CHAPTER VII

# MODERN ENTERTAINMENTS

One thing the entertainments of our day—from cinema and radio to dog-racing, football matches and the like—have in common: they can be enjoyed in utter passivity, and require not even a minimum of mental or any other exertion. Entertainments popular with our ancestors—music and dance, collecting and hobbies, the pursuit of arts and crafts, serious reading and conversation—were impossible, of course, without such exertion. So our ancestors had at least something in common with ancient Greece, where practically all the young took an active part in the entertainments provided by sport, and theatrical entertainment for the masses required a good deal of mental response. It is not altogether fanciful to relate the modern fear of independent thought and responsibility with the modern taste in entertainments.

A man out in his boat for a day's relaxation will exercise his mind and body more within twelve hours than he would in a year's visits to cinemas and dog races.

Since so much modern work is of an automatic nature and makes few, if any, demands upon the mind, pastimes could redress the balance only if they were to mobilize mind and body, and stimulate personal initiative.

## I

# THE CINEMA

Purely on merit, the influence of the cinema should be negligible. Very few films mirror life as it is known to nine-tenths of the audience; they evade the questions of the moment; they do not deal truthfully with the great problems that preoccupy humanity; except for educational films (which the majority of the audience follow with but one eye open), they convey next to no information or instruction. The picture of life they

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present is either untrue, or so distorted, idealized, or sentimentalized as to be of no value outside the movie theatre.

Why then should the influence of the cinema be so great? To begin with, more than any civilization of the past ours gives fullest scope to the wishdream. For the vast majority, life has become so uniform, so full of fears, and, at the same time, of temptation and of glittering prizes beyond most people's reach, that only the wishdream provides escape into a brighter paradise.

The cinema feeds the wishdream as nothing else could. The wishdream is the most private domain of each one of us. In it we enter a very personal world, and not the one we have to share with all the other members of the community to which we belong. We may (and usually do) respond to the appeals made to us as members of that community—appeals to our political and civic sense, our patriotism or sense of duty—but such appeals do not stir us as deeply as do the more personal claims of the wishdream. Then there is the power of the cinema over unbridled imagination. Such imagination is the chief instrument through which the wishdream expresses itself, and in films it finds its major fount of nourishment.

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Because the film offers us living (though mostly distorted) examples of conduct in every possible situation, it has enormous power to influence our own conduct. The young man who visits the cinema once or twice a week, naturally tries to imitate some of the ways and manners of movie stars. Though by nature not necessarily of a heroic disposition, he goes out of his way to impress his girl with the notion that he belongs to the race of the strong, silent, fearless, wicked, romantic, or any other of the ever-recurring types of movie hero that he admires himself. On her part, the girl attempts to appear to him as of the breed of glamorous, sisterly, seductive, or other types of heroine that the movies trot out week after week. Both he and she accentuate in their behaviour something that is either entirely absent from their true make-up, or forms but an insignificant part of it.

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Naturally each is trying to assume the pose which holds the greatest promise of attracting the other; and neither of them realizes that something artificial and insincere has crept into their attitude. As soon as they have caught a glimpse of each other's true personality, they feel disappointed. If they are lucky, this happens before a permanent union between them has been established. Very often, however, they make the discovery when it is too late. Anyone acquainted with divorce and separation cases knows how often a modern marriage suffers shipwreck because husband and wife expected from one another something more in tune with the make-believe characters of the movies.

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Probably the most dangerous aspect of the movies is its influence upon sexual relationships of the young. That the suggestive character of so many films—implied not only by the plot, characters, situations and clothes, but also by the film's inevitable enlargement and accentuation of physical detail—stimulates sex-awareness is self-evident.

But the influence goes further than that. Young people who without the assistance of the movies would not have known how to make the preliminary steps in the love-game, nowadays are only too eager to find out whether the lessons of seduction, love-making, and the rest, learned in the movies, will prove effective in real life.

Sexual knowledge of the right kind is of inestimable value for the young. The wrong kind of knowledge is more dangerous than ignorance.

The young, whether at puberty or past it, respond strongly to an erotically suggestive scene or detail. It titillates their sexual appetite, but can neither still it, nor provide the means for its sublimation. Sooner or later such persistent, and at the same time sterile, stimulation of their sex awareness produces impatience and discontent. The young man who without that influence would have found perfect contentment in a platonic friendship with his girl, presses for sexual gratification. If all his efforts fail, he easily rids himself of her, and tries to find a more obliging girl.

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A medium as popular and rich in potentialities as the cinema, could be of inestimable value in human relations. Even without glamour, sentimentality, sex, or heroics, it could show what is most precious in them. In a few rare cases it has already achieved this. Without chasing wishdreams or distorting truth, it could stress the importance of even the most commonplace people by pointing to what is positive and decent in them. At present it delights in stressing the lust, dishonesty, greed or homicidal instincts of the average man and woman.

Why is this so? Because film producers are wicked by nature, and interested only in crime and murder? Of course not. The true reason is that to make an ordinary decent character interesting is much more difficult than to glamorize a wicked one. Unfortunately, nine out of ten film producers always play for safety, and follow the path of least resistance. So instead of concentrating on the daily problems of ordinary folk, they depict escapades such as are never experienced by the average film-goer. Yet, like everyone else, they must know that the most humdrum existence is full of a thousand little (and great) things that, when seen through the prism of art, can be as exciting as the most hair-raising adventures of a Frankenstein. By proper selection and right accent, the film could invest those humdrum things with artistic significance and thus enable them to fertilize the spectator's *creative* imagination. And this seems more important than merely to titillate all the lower instincts, and then leave them unsatisfied.

The occasional film that attempts to stimulate the creative imagination (as a rule, it seems to come from the Continent) is too rare to outbalance the predominantly negative influence of the cinema. But the possibilities are there, waiting to be made use of by men of vision and artistic integrity; by men who think in terms not of impersonal items in a machine, and of box-office returns, but of adult human beings and their relations with one another.

It would be unfair, however, to lay the entire blame at the doorstep of the film moguls. They cater for a public whose cinematic tastes and wishes are shaped not by the movies alone but by the entirety of the culture and civilization whose



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products they are. Their tastes cannot improve so long as the culture in which they live does not improve. So though a great deal could be achieved by the film czars themselves, their reforming zest would not be enough without the support of the many other agencies of cultural life, from Governments to educators, and social workers to the press.

A great responsibility rests also on the shoulders of the film critic. In the large newspapers of the world's capitals he is, as a rule, a free agent and can express his true opinions without fear. The situation is, however, quite different when we come to the provincial press. There the film critic is seldom given a completely free hand. However bad a film may be, he will hardly dare to express his true opinion and warn the public against it. If he did so, the local movie theatres, which are among the main advertisers of small provincial papers, would soon descend upon him or, rather, upon his employer, and, finally, withdraw their advertisements. The owner of a large national paper in the capital can afford to disregard the wrath of the film-magnate whose advertisements play but an insignificant part in his paper. At the same time, the latter could hardly afford not to advertise in an important newspaper. Where small provincial papers are concerned, this is not the case, and the film-critic is too often condemned to being an unwilling tool in the hands of the advertiser. This is deplorable. For the film industry's main support comes not from the capitals but from the vast provincial public. It is with the taste of this public that the film producer has to reckon. And its taste is hardly likely to improve so long as the reviewer upon whose opinions it depends cannot afford to express his honest opinion, and aims at enticing them into the cinemas at all costs.

## II

### THE PRESS

The principal object of the press is not, of course, entertainment. Yet, except for the more serious-minded minority, who read one of the few semi-official or authoritative journals, the majority turn to their paper for entertainment. The newspaper

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provides in fact the only 'literary' entertainment of which some people ever avail themselves. Conscious of their demands, the papers that cater for them concentrate on the element of entertainment, and treat politics and news only as a secondary matter, or try to present them in a way that might make them resemble entertainment.

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Though newspapers have an undisputed effect upon a person's knowledge (and, to a lesser degree, upon his ideas), they influence his relations with his fellow-beings far less than does the cinema. Information imparted by a newspaper is, so to speak, static. Its appeal to the imagination is circumscribed. Most of what a man sees in his paper he forgets by the time he has finished reading it. We may read in our daily paper of men in a submarine or a coalmine, of the way women wear their dresses, or poison their husbands. But such knowledge remains 'flat', and goes no deeper than to the surface of our intellect. On the movie screen all such examples are 'alive'. Every change of facial expression, every accent of a voice, is before us. Their combined imprint is left not merely upon the intellect but on the emotions and the imagination as well.

Yet though the effect of the newspaper upon our relations with others may be limited, it nevertheless operates. No one could remain completely unaffected by an influence to which he voluntarily exposes himself every day, and which he approaches with a certain amount of trust. And even in the age of the wireless, the newspaper provides the only continuous and regular source of most of our information. It has, in fact, become part of our lives. (The person who reads his paper every day may be visiting the cinema only once every few weeks, if at all. It is less likely that the regular cinema-goer reads his paper as rarely.) So it would hardly be an exaggeration to say that the minds of a vast percentage of modern people are shaped chiefly by the knowledge and suggestions garnered from their daily paper.

Can a newspaper discharge its obvious responsibility in regard to human relations more beneficially than at present?

## CULTURE AND LEISURE

Since modern civilization fosters so much that is essentially inimical to satisfactory human relations, a truly responsible newspaper would naturally have to propagate doctrines that do the reverse. It would have to do this even if such doctrines happen to be unpopular with those in power, or with the majority that approves of the robot-tendencies of our civilization.

The first of such doctrines would have to be one diametrically opposed to the prevailing one of assessing all values of life in terms of materialism, and material success as the main criterion of achievement and advance. Unfortunately, the tendency of most newspapers is to concentrate on the 'success story' with its materialistic moral: errand boy becomes millionaire; local farm girl marries rich man; grocer's wife wins a fortune in football pools. Stories such as these only strengthen the reader's conviction that material success (irrespective of how obtained, so long as not by actual crime) is the thing that matters most.

On the positive side there is unlimited scope for proclaiming the importance of spiritual values and of those cultural factors that so often go with them. It is, of course, more difficult to produce a 'snappy' article on such themes than on the success-story, crime and sex. Even to read of them may call for a greater intellectual effort. But since, unlike the radio and the cinema, the newspaper calls for at least the exertion of reading, there might be room for just that bit more effort that would enable the reader to partake of a fare that is really worth while. Moreover, the life of spiritual and intellectual workers lends itself quite as much to exciting description as does that of movie stars or gangsters; and the complex and fascinating processes by which a thinker, artist, or scientist, arrives at his conclusions can make quite as good copy as do those by which police detectives trace a crime.

A great deal of our faulty valuation of life is due to either ignorance or intolerance. Can the press help us to reform ourselves? Indeed it can, by becoming genuinely progressive. By progressive I do not mean running after the latest political catchword, or eulogizing the newest mechanical toy. The term

## MODERN ENTERTAINMENTS

progressiveness as applied to literature in general, and the press in particular, means open-mindedness, and lack of prejudice in the moral sphere. For it is within that sphere that most of our own prejudices are born and thrive. Thus the progressiveness of a newspaper should embrace such subjects as law and medicine, sociology and psychology, religion, foreign countries, class problems, and the like. It should not encourage class prejudices, national animosities, moral prudery, or sexual intolerance. Its postulates should be based neither on the preferences of those in power, nor the conventions of the day, but on the factual findings of those who have dedicated their lives to the study of those subjects.

Then there is the somewhat ticklish problem of truthfulness. Far be it from me to suggest that the press is anything but truthful. It cannot, however, be denied that the average paper tries to be 'snappy', and to present truth 'entertainingly'. In such efforts it inevitably dramatizes, glamorizes, sentimentalizes. Any of these implies removing the focus from what is truest and most essential to the secondary or superficial. Yet at a time when most of our mental fare is handed to us in a predigested state, and independent thought is increasingly replaced by the wishdream, the press could render invaluable service by uncompromising truthfulness and realism—at any rate where truth is ascertainable and its publication would not result in a libel action. Let us also remember that the intellectual benefits of truth cannot be divorced from its moral foundations, which are honesty and candour. Every interference with truth is bound to damage those virtues and to turn men into unconscious liars or hypocrites. Truth and morality being inseparable, the duties of the press are not only intellectual (in the widest meaning of this word), but also moral.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NATURE

Rousseau's rococo dreams of bucolic happiness are almost as far removed from the truth about Nature's influence on human intercourse as are the opinions of a man who finds happiness only in cinemas or night clubs. Dr. Johnson's affirmation that only a great city provides the means for an active intellectual life may have been right. But what mattered to him most was that a man should always find access to learned discourse upon literary and kindred topics. Whether outside of the club and drawing-room, where the venerable sage was wont to meet his talk-companions, their lives were happy or not, mattered to him far less. Dr. Johnson underestimated the value of Nature's influence upon human intercourse simply because he did not live in the country. For probably only those who do so can assess that influence correctly.

It is in Nature that poets and all sensitive beings read the most significant truths of existence.

To see a world in a grain of sand,  
And a heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand,  
And eternity in an hour . . .

wrote William Blake with the clairvoyance of a poet who was also a mystic.

Of course, Nature's spell is everlasting and unchanging for she takes us away from man-made shams and pretences, and brings us face to face with realities. There are the rhythms of the seasons, of day and night, of light and dark; the processes of conception, germination and fruition; of growth and decay, health and sickness and the battle for survival; and, last but not least, there is the alternation of man's service and Nature's returns. More than any philosophic system Nature teaches us that immutable laws cannot be by-passed, and that the virtues

## NATURE

of labour, patience and thrift pay lasting dividends. Working on the land soon teaches that you cannot gain the quick and easy success that bluff and subterfuge may possibly secure you in some urban enterprise. On the land, you cannot live by your wits, or get away with pretences and falsity. The laws you obey are not based on shifting conventions, but on eternal truths. So your sense of values will be sounder, steadier, when Nature's lessons and examples are ever present for you.

Whether permanent contact with Nature, that is to say, life on the land, makes you more honest with others, I frankly do not know. But the country offers fewer temptations and makes it more difficult to hide your misdeeds. I do know, however, that it makes you more honest with yourself. Since you are forced to be honest in regard to Nature, you cannot help absorbing some of that honesty as a kind of permanent standby.<sup>1</sup>

I also know that life on the land gives you an inner centre of stability—and thus mental steadiness—such as only few are able to develop in towns. It makes you contented with less than you would consider adequate in a city; but the quality of your contentment is different: it goes deeper and is more solid.

Work on the land—if only in the form of regular gardening—demands an exertion of both mind and body. So you cannot help being less circumscribed than when working in office or factory. Even sport does not offer the same chance to exercise the whole of your body. The more thoroughly mental and physical activities are integrated, the better is your not-merely-physical health, so helpful in human relations.

Life in the country offers fewer opportunities for formal culture than does urban existence, though its own peculiar culture can be acquired nowhere else. Constant preoccupation with the weather; and the company of dumb beasts, fields, trees, and cabbages, is not likely to turn you into a good conversationalist. Nevertheless the fact remains that some of the most beloved books in world literature were written by men and women who spent most of their lives in the non-intellectual

<sup>1</sup> 'Wonderful to relate, poets have found religion in nature; people live in the country to learn virtue from plants' (*The Moment*, by Virginia Woolf, p. 19, The Hogarth Press, 1947).

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atmosphere of some rural retreat, far from the confusion and distractions of the town

'This is all very well', the impatient reader will exclaim, 'but how can a more intimate contact with Nature be established in a civilization that is predominantly industrial, and that keeps drawing people not from the towns to the land, but in the opposite direction?'

There is no single answer to this question. For the time being the dream of smaller, self-contained communities which would offer a compromise between urban and rural existence (see chapter *The Economic Incubus*) is but a dream. So for most people life in the country remains an unattainable goal. But even occasional (if regular) contact with Nature can produce beneficent effects. The fortnight's holiday, even if spent in the country and not in the hubbub of seaside place, is obviously not enough. Anyhow, it represents just one break in the rhythm of the year. To become effective, the influence of Nature must be so frequent as to become a regular part of life.

The French have solved this problem better than the English of whom only the better-off enjoy the 'luxury' of a weekend retreat in the country. In France almost every other urban family has its little plot away from the town. On Sundays its members can tend the peas and artichokes, the apricot tree and strawberries of its *potager*, and turn into *paysans*, instead of being satisfied with the role of mere weekenders. However utilitarian their motive, the French seem to know by instinct that their weekly transformation into horticulturists benefits not only their stomachs or their pockets but also their minds and bodies. To achieve this, no 'country house', not even a bungalow, is necessary. Our own weekend habit of lounging over the Sunday papers—interrupted by a 'spot' of gardening and a constitutional between lunch and tea—may be quite as pleasant, but does not bring us so close to the land.

Any periodical escape to the country—whether by train or bicycle—is beneficial. But we must not 'carry the town in our haversack', or Nature will reveal none of her messages to us.

## CHAPTER IX

# SUMMER HOLIDAYS

## I

### THE CALL OF THE SEA

Contemplate any large town in England in August: endless queues at the railway and coach stations; harassed fathers and mothers trying to hold on to their miscellaneous luggage and their progeny, and hoping to find seats in the overcrowded conveyances. Their ultimate destination? The seaside, of course, Blackpool and Margate, Southend, and Brighton, or the remoter beaches of Dorset, Cornwall or Wales. There may be a few less adventurous spirits turning towards quieter retreats inland, among the downs and forests, in ancient villages; a few more ambitious ones, setting out for continental resorts. But they form only a minority. To the great majority summer holidays mean the sea. Or, rather, the beach, with its pebbles or sands, with lobster-coloured sunburn and peeling skin, with donkey rides, crowded boarding houses, ice-cream booths and fun-fair.

Whatever else the sea may mean to the Englishman during the rest of the year, at his holiday time it symbolizes freedom and adventure. The deep racial links between him and the sea are part of his history. Yet the clerk or shopkeeper whose forebears always lived in towns is not likely suddenly to hear its call in his blood when the holiday season is at hand. His tradition of the sea is formed by something more personal; namely, the summer holidays of his own parents and grandparents. It reaches back merely to the eighteenth century. Yet though, as English traditions go, not a very ancient one, it appeals to something innate and very real to people born on an island and depending so much on the sea.

Anyhow, there it is, and Mr. Brown and Mrs. Brown—not



## CULTURE AND LEISURE

to speak of the little Browns—would consider their year lacking in its supreme climax if it did not contain the fortnight by the sea.

Naturally it is not merely the sea that endows that fortnight with its full significance. It also provides release from the daily round and convention; and, therefore, might be considered as an escape into adventure. Frenchmen or Italians no doubt enjoy their summer holidays as much as Englishmen do. Yet their break from the every-day tenor of life to the higher pitch of the holiday is less marked. Conventions do not hold them in quite so close a bondage, and so they do not feel the Englishman's strong urge for a release from them. And *joie de vivre* is for them not to be sought during holidays alone. If not precisely a permanent state, it is, at any rate, their perennial ambition. Not so for the Englishman.<sup>1</sup> Only during the summer holiday does he summon the courage to 'let himself go'. Unreservedly he now accepts unconventional clothes, verging on nudity of which otherwise he may strongly disapprove,<sup>2</sup> irregular hours for meals, even making a fool of himself. So the holiday really does bring release and adventure to him.

Yet there are limits to both: the release is achieved within the bosom of the same family that imposes upon the *pater-familias* its obligations during the remaining fifty weeks of the year; and the discarded conventions are only minor ones. Thus the effect of the holidays upon his conduct is really less lasting than we might have anticipated. It may improve his health and temper, and, thus, be of benefit to his wife and children,

<sup>1</sup> It is perhaps excusable to speak only of the effects of a holiday upon him and not upon his wife. For her the change from daily routine to holidays is less drastic. She still has to look after the family, mend their clothes, think of their picnics and perform a hundred other of her customary duties. Moreover, for her there is no break from a daily routine of morning and evening trains, and of days spent away from home. However much she may look forward to the yearly escape from sink and brooms, the holiday is obviously less an adventure for her than for him.

<sup>2</sup> I am obviously referring to the period since 1914. For before then the Englishman was as strict in his dress conventions on the beach as he was in his office; and near-nudity dared not assert itself even under the water.

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not to speak of himself. But after he has returned from it to his normal routine, he will dismiss as childish whatever fancies had made his holiday pulse beat faster. Nevertheless, during the fortnight he has explored a greater number of new avenues—however short and narrow these may have been—than he is wont to explore during the rest of the year, and so the experience has been to the good. Above all, it has helped to ‘recharge his batteries’ as an individual.

Yet it would be foolish to expect more profound effects from the holiday. If a man cannot catch glimpses of happiness, or acquire inner freedom, during the normal fifty weeks of the year, he is not likely to find them during the fortnight on the beach of Blackpool, Cannes, or Honolulu.

No person who works should be deprived of the change, pleasure, stimulus, or rest that the yearly holiday provides. But no wise man should delude himself that such a holiday is the panacea that the vote-catching ‘humanitarians’ of our times claim it to be.

## II

### HOLIDAY CAMPS

The more individual the character of our holiday and the greater the opportunities they provide for independence and adventure, the deeper will be the beneficial effects. Unfortunately, even the holiday—one of the few remaining spheres of life that still leave room for individual adventure—is being invaded by the worshippers of the sausage machine and the purveyors of its mass-produced goods. The latest commodity they turn out of that machine is called the Holiday Camp, and so we now have to add this new blessing to all the other pre-fabricated entertainments of our times—radio, cinema, dog-racing, and all the rest.

If you submit as meekly to the tyranny of that newest blessing as you have to that of all the others, you will naturally be saved from those heated debates in spring as to whether this time it should be Margate or Eastbourne. You will spare yourself all those letters to boarding houses and hotels, and the headaches and conferences over the replies received. No longer

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will you have any excuse for day-dreams about what you will do on the first day of your holiday, and how you will spend your evenings. In fact, the exhilaration that a man experiences whenever he has to determine for himself which of a dozen possible decisions to take, you will be able to leave to less progressive-minded folk than yourself. Time-tables and accommodation, meals and pastimes, company, and every other detail of your holiday, will be thrust upon you ready-made. So you need not spend an atom of mental exertion on planning what you will do, how you will do it, in whose company, under what circumstances. And, once you have reached your prefabricated El Dorado, you will enjoy your daily breakfast in peace, instead of having it enlivened by excited discussions as to whether the day is to be devoted to swimming or a picnic excursion. There will be no packing and repacking of food baskets, no consultation of time-tables, no venturing into the unknown.

Instead you will find community games, community meals, community romping, community jollity. In your more old-fashioned days you tried to escape for a fortnight from being a stereotyped John Brown, like a thousand other Browns. Now the great sausage machine will make you indistinguishable not only from all those other Browns, but also from the Smiths and Joneses and Robinsons.

. . . . .

Whether the modern Holiday Camp meets a pressing social need or not, it is bound to accelerate the present movement towards ever greater uniformity of people and their ways. And, as we have seen, uniformity is among the worst enemies of desirable human relations.

Should we, in some near or distant future, be faced with another Dunkirk—will we still find the thousands of old-fashioned individualists—drapers, bank managers, chimney-sweeps, shop assistants, municipal rat-catchers—whose spirit of adventure and initiative will enable them to replace a non-existent Armada, and man the 'little ships'?

By refusing to submit to yet another impersonal master in

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the shape of Holiday Camps, we may not be able to regain the individual freedom and independence that should be the true glory of a mature civilization. Yet by preserving our holiday as an expression of our personal tastes and preferences, we may at least help in delaying the process of complete annihilation by the great sausage machine.

## CHAPTER X

### PUB AND CAFÉ

In an age in which the common citizen receives most of his fare of amusement pre-digested by such impersonal auto-crats as movie executives, radio companies, fairy-mothers of the Holiday Camp or the benevolent uncles who run professional football, the pub in England and the continental café are among the few recreational refuges in which the individual still counts, and where personal initiative may still be exercised. But though in many respects pub and café may seem very much alike, their influences could hardly be more dissimilar.

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Whatever its defenders may say, the English pub is socially not entirely *comme il faut*. The continental café is; and so is even the American drug-store, that hybrid cousin of both, and unlike either. However lyrical poets of old, and intellectuals of to-day, may wax over the pub, and however respectable its customers and innocent its pastimes, we cannot get away from the fact that it is not regarded as on par with other places of social intercourse, such as the restaurant, the club, the private drawing-room or parlour. This is by no means a matter of class, for, like the café, the pub caters for all classes, and is not the exclusive refuge of the 'working man' (whatever that may mean). There are almost as many social variants in pubs as there are in cafés. Yet though a man may be a regular pub habitué, he is not likely to boast about it. If he belongs to the 'better classes', and is a lawyer, bank manager, doctor or scholar, he will venture into a pub only rarely. Instead he visits his club or other places that are considered more in keeping with his status.

The continental café is completely outside social assessment. From cabinet ministers, high court judges and university professors to clerks, artists, manual workers, all frequent it. Whether

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this fundamental distinction between pub and café is a cause or a result of their respective characters, it inevitably produces very different effects. But this is only one of the distinctions.

The pub shuts itself off from the outside, with painted, frosted or screened windows. Hardly ever can you look in to see who is inside. Even within, there reigns a similar tendency to privacy: saloon, lounge, private and public bar are all screened off from one another, as though their patrons were afraid of seeing, or mixing with, other categories. The café, on the other hand, takes pride in its vast unscreened windows, its terraces or verandahs that almost incorporate it with the life of the street. There is a sense of general openness, and you cannot hide from the passers-by even if you would.

Is it the pub's ambiguous social status that is responsible for its faint air of secretiveness? Or is it the Englishman's innate desire for privacy? Probably both. Anyhow, whereas there exists a distinct line between an Englishman's life as a citizen and his hours at the pub—the café sessions of its continental habitués are an integral part of their lives. The Englishman rather keeps to himself what happens in the pub, and his wife and family hear little about it; café experiences form a considerable part of continental conversation at home. It is as if only part of the Englishman's being allowed itself to be impregnated with the life of the pub, whereas no such restrictions limit the corresponding influence of the café.

. . . . .

And now we come to what for the purpose of this examination is perhaps the most significant difference in the respective influences of pub and café. The pub is predominantly (and until fairly recently, almost exclusively) a meeting place for men; the café permits men and women to mingle, and both are exposed to its influence. It provides in fact a convenient social bridge between them. If it be true that the society of women refines men and makes them more gentle, the pub cannot claim to make much contribution there. It might perhaps be said that in the more humane atmosphere of English life, so innocent of the more violent contrasts and passions of the Continent, the

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male feels less in need of woman's refining influence. In keeping the pub to himself, he may possibly be as much driven by instinct as his continental cousin with other aims in view. Whether it be so or not—and no answer could be based on anything but surmise—the fact remains that the desire for the presence of women contributes to the café's popularity among continental men. Quite apart from any other possible attractions, female company offers him the variety of intellectual conversation which (on the Continent) is often to be found only in mixed company. The Englishman, on the other hand, directs his steps towards the pub to escape from female company, and the domestic gossip that it so easily introduces.

Let us admit that, unlike his continental cousin, the Englishman does enjoy exclusively male company. Is it sheer accident that he was the first one to invent the all-male club? The male exclusiveness of club and pub is not the outcome of either of these institutions, but one of their causes. Most foreign students of English life have remarked on the superior position of the English male over the English female. In France the aim of fashion designers and their armies of helpers is to beautify woman: in England—to flatter man. For well over a hundred years London has been the Mecca of male fashion. What the Rue de la Paix means to smart women all over the world, Savile Row and St. James's mean to that section of international manhood who can afford to think of their appearance. Just as the purveyors of fashion, so the English club and England's preoccupation with sport emphasized the superior position of the male. The all-male pub strengthens that sense of superiority, or, at any rate, stills male doubts as to whether he is perhaps deluding himself. And for that reason the pub-addict resents the more recent invasion of his sanctum by woman. Her mere presence upsets something very essential in the pub's life and in the enjoyment derived from it.

We find a somewhat similar situation in the United States, even though there the respective roles of the sexes are reversed. The American woman has undoubtedly attained a position of domination and social superiority over the American man. He not only admits that superiority, but willingly acquiesces in it.

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The American woman's domination (besides other contributory causes) has also brought about her greater social exclusiveness. With her all-women clubs, luncheons, committees and all kinds of organizations, she enjoys emphasizing her superiority in a way not dissimilar—though far more accentuated—from that of the Englishman in relation to his pub. And just as he has developed certain ways and mannerisms from his pub-habit, so has she acquired a self-assurance of speech and manner that might be described, not incorrectly, as her club-manner.

. . . . .

So far no mention has been made of what might be called the cultural or intellectual differences in the effects of café and pub. By many of its habitués the café is sought not only for company and entertainment but also for serious conversation and intellectual interchange. French artistic and intellectual life of the last hundred years is almost unthinkable without the café. (To only a slightly lesser extent is this true of the role of the café in Italy, Austria, and all the South-Eastern countries.) Many a 'movement' in France was conceived in cafés; some of the profoundest debates of French artists and *littérateurs* have taken place in the cafés of Montmartre and Montparnasse.

Even Dr. Johnson's 'Mitre' (incidentally, an eating place rather than a pub) could never have competed in its intellectual or artistic influences with the Café du Dôme in Paris. The truth is that the pub tends to eschew intellectual conversation.

It is not perhaps accidental that whereas one of the most popular entertainments sought by many habitués of the café is the rather intellectual game of chess, the pub gives preference to darts.

. . . . .

If we left our picture of pub and café as it has emerged so far, the impression might easily be created that the English place is much inferior to its continental counterpart. Evidently our picture is incomplete.

To begin with, the human atmosphere of the pub has not been mentioned—one of its main assets. For that atmosphere induces a sense of quiet contentment and good cheer, unknown



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among the brighter colours and louder voices of the café. Perhaps it needs the slightly musty old-worldliness and intimacy, or, as an American friend of mine called it, stuffiness, peculiar to the pub, to create that atmosphere. Then there is the greater intimacy between visitor and publican. The publican lives on the premises, and he and his wife serve their customers year in year out. Inevitably a more personal relationship is established than is possible between the visitor to the café and its more vagrant waiters. (I have known cafés on the Continent where both the atmosphere of the place and the relations between customers and waiters were quite as personal as they are in our own pub. But such cafés represent a minority. The corresponding pub is typical for all of them. The insignificant exception is represented by the 'posh' modern pub which, whether consciously or unconsciously, is trying to ape the continental café.)

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✱ Probably none of the influences exercised by the pub counts for more than the sense of tolerance that it induces. Since the war the decrease in moral intolerance has, unfortunately, gone hand in hand with a very marked increase in political and social intolerance. For this the pub provides a limited, nevertheless a most welcome, counter-influence. The man who dogmatically lays down the law or 'shoots a line', the faddist or fanatic, will not find congenial company in the pub, and will soon feel that his presence is not particularly welcome. On the other hand, the man who lets you have your say without interrupting you, who respects your opinions even if he disagrees with them, who does not pretend that he is the repository of all the world's wisdom, will always find a hearty welcome. If occasionally he exaggerates, expresses an unpopular or heretical opinion, and lets his temper *almost* get the better of him, no one will mind, that is, so long as he keeps within certain bounds. Those bounds are imposed by the sense of unity and good cheer that are part of the pub's life.

In the continental café nobody minds how preposterous your views, how intolerant or fanatical you are. Even the most violent

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argument cannot shake the café's framework, not contaminate its atmosphere. For, unlike the pub, the café does not make you a member of a community; you are an individual islet among many other islets strewn over the more impersonal sea of the establishment.

It seems unlikely that a pub, open uninterruptedly from morning till night, would be as conducive to idleness as is the café. Both its comforts and attractions are too limited. In the café, the mere attraction of sitting in comfort and warmth over a drink, armed with all the day's newspapers, or watching the life of the street outside, encourages idleness. And since on the Continent so much more of life is enacted in the streets than it is in England—few English being born *flâneurs*—that spectacle alone offers greater attraction than a 'continentalized' pub ever could. So the café certainly offers greater opportunities to the idler and the 'drone'!

. . . . .

Whatever the merits and demerits of pub and café, in their distinctive ways both have contributed to shaping the outlook of their respective customers. Without them neither an Englishman nor a Frenchman or Italian would be quite what he is in relation to his fellow-beings.

## CHAPTER XI

### FOOD

Few nations know as much about the influence of food upon human intercourse as do the French. Few nations know less about it than the English. The average English attitude towards food is casual, if not actually apologetic, uninformed, and, at its best, amateurish. That of the French is positive and emphatic, comprehensive, technical and erudite. The Englishman's enjoyment of food is weakened by his subconscious belief in the sinfulness of all the pleasures of the flesh; the Frenchman's is strengthened by his conviction that such pleasures are his legitimate birth-right. Englishwomen cook because they have to; but they dream of a paradise in which they would be freed from that necessity. Frenchwomen love cooking because they enjoy the thrill of putting their creative abilities to a test, rendered the more pleasant by its obvious rewards. The culinary ideal of most Englishwomen is represented by anything labour-saving: hence their predilection for tinned food, biscuits, joints (that merely need throwing into the baking tin), vegetables that require no more than a bath in boiling water. Frenchwomen abhor tinned food.<sup>1</sup> They love preparing complicated dishes that improve the flavour of indifferent produce, or make good produce taste even better; they revel in bringing out the last atom of flavour enshrined in an aubergine, artichoke, lettuce or carrot, by treating them with the requisite care and combining them with the most suitable ingredients; they love experimenting, concocting new dishes, trying out new recipes.

<sup>1</sup> I am obviously referring to more normal conditions than those that have been created by the Second World War. When food is extremely scarce, even Frenchwomen are grateful if they can obtain a tin of any food whatsoever. But the post-war difficulties have not altered the fundamental attitude towards food of either the French or the Englishwoman.

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All this, of course, takes time. Yet though the Frenchwoman is quite as much burdened with domestic duties as her English sister, she somehow always manages to find time for worthwhile cookery.

Being more given to a sensuous appreciation of life, the French treat the problem of food with all the love and respect that its importance deserves. Though in England, too, many people appreciate the delights of gastronomy, the traditions of Puritanism and Victorianism are too deeply inbred; and so food is not deemed as worthy of so serious an approach as, say, sport. The French, being greater realists, and less given to moral cant, not only admit their joy in food, but devote to it a great deal of thought, professional knowledge, and, last but not least, expenditure.

. . . . .

It is hardly necessary to enlarge upon such obvious effects of feeding as the sense of wellbeing and benevolence engendered by a good meal, or the feelings of dissatisfaction caused by a bad one. To this wellbeing we may add the sense of pride and exhilaration produced in the cook who delights in her job, and is conscious of the value of her achievement. Because Frenchwomen (and women of several other continental countries) thoroughly enjoy cooking, and feel fully repaid by the appreciation shown by those for whom they have exerted themselves, they are at their best when presiding over a meal that they themselves have created. For the opposite reasons, many Englishwomen on similar occasions feel (and look) worn out and anything but effective.

As well as smacking of hypocrisy, the refusal to acknowledge the importance of food is also an admission that one of the natural sources of pleasure is quite unexplored. But the wholehearted acceptance of that fact, implying neither gluttony, nor the rendering unto Brillat-Savarin of what is God's, can be eminently helpful in human intercourse. It is a bad doctrine that preaches virtue at the price of negation of the joys offered us by Nature's abundance, allied with the art of man. The fruits of the earth and our ability to extract from them all that is good

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were given us not to be enjoyed furtively, and with an uneasy conscience, but with unashamed thankfulness and rejoicing. Of course such joys are not meant to compete with the elations of the spirit or the mind. But without them, none (save a few fakirs, yogis or mystics) can develop the healthy balance of mind and body without which deformity and warping will ensue.

. . . . .

Unfortunately, such is the imperfection of matter, or, rather, of man, that even something as innocent as food can make of us its slaves. I am not referring to the glutton nor to the gourmet or gourmand who feels dejected until his palate is titillated by culinary delicacies. It is not usually among these groups that we find the slaves to food. They are found rather among people with little appreciation of its finer points. The Frenchman used to the noblest traditions of his native cuisine may, when confronted by an English boarding-house meal, give vent to his sarcasm, but will nevertheless wade through the undefinable soup, the watered meat, and the murdered vegetables. But as often as not the Englishman, unable when abroad to get his bacon and eggs or his steak, refuses to do justice to 'this foreign muck'. And his good lady, her innate graciousness failing her at the deprivation, is dismayed at the foreigner's failure to provide afternoon tea. Their resulting self-denial will affect their tempers for the rest of the day, or the rest of the stay.

Such slavery to food-conventions goes ill with members of a race who rightly pride themselves on carrying adventure in their blood. To accept gladly new food, new habits, new points of view, is to give practical expression to the spirit of adventure. Adventure in unexplored seas of gastronomy can contribute greatly to our enjoyment of life. It can broaden our outlook and even make us more companionable; for every experience life offers can contribute something new to our make-up. Think of the *bonhomie* engendered by just one perfect omelette. Yet this is a fairly commonplace culinary excursion. Adventures await us at every turn—the steaming *kus-kus* of

## FOOD

the Arab, the sizzling *frittura di pesce* at Venice or Naples, the Polish *bigos*, the Russian beetroot soup, the *strudels* of Vienna and Prague. But if we approach such adventures with a spirit thwarted by our old food conventions, then we prove that we are slaves to our stomachs, and jaded even before the adventure begins.



PART V

PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT





# INTRODUCTION

## I

### ESCAPE FROM HUMAN RELATIONS

However wise or mature we may be, however successfully we may have grappled with the various outside influences that affect our relations with our fellow-beings, there still remain the more personal readjustments that have to be made daily, almost hourly. It is the efficacy of these that finally determines whether a relationship is to be successful or not.

It will help us if before examining some of those adjustments individually we remind ourselves of two important truths: (1) that the difficulties of personal adjustment can be so great that, rather than face them, many people escape from a worthwhile relationship altogether; and (2) that the problems of such a relationship cannot be solved in one clean sweep once and for all, but are gradually overcome, with inevitable setbacks here and there.

The number of the difficulties, and their magnitude, is testified to by the innumerable wreckages. Though we may not instantly perceive these, we notice at a glance the compensations that have been sought in their stead: such compensations as pet dogs and 'good works', gambling and gardening, drink and sexual promiscuity, every kind of hobby and every variety of religious mania, political fanaticism, social prejudice.

If relevant statistics could be compiled, they would probably disclose that for every collector, drunkard, or social worker, who follows his passion because of an inherent predisposition, there are at least two who have developed that passion to compensate them for their failure to establish a happy relationship with another person.<sup>1</sup> Only if such compensations represent

<sup>1</sup> "In Tristan and Isolde he found sublime compensation for his own domestic failure", writes Louis Aragon of one of the characters in his novel: *Passengers of Destiny*.

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

genuine sublimation do they imply success; otherwise they are mere escape.

Fondness for animals is undoubtedly a very genuine trait of the British character. Yet it is questionable whether so many British people would be spending so much of their time in cossetting dogs, cats or horses, if they had succeeded in establishing a firm and satisfactory link with another person.

I do not wish to imply that this failure on our part is greater than in other countries. Our means of escape may be individual to ourselves, but so are corresponding ones to the citizens of other countries: the Russians escape to vodka, or to morbid introspection; the Germans to self-abandonment in Wagner's wish-dream worlds, or to intellectual abstraction from which the last drop of human warmth has been squeezed away; the Americans into work and money-making.

. . . . .

Not all escapes necessarily lead away from our fellow-men. There is the club-addict, both male and female, or the habitué of the pub, to name but two. Actually, both visit their particular haunt in search of human contacts. But even when they find companions for a few hours' human interchange, their success is but a substitute for their failure in respect to the one person who matters to them most: the wife or husband, parent or friend. Even the corresponding success of a statesman, orator or artist, may be of a like nature. In the appreciation of an impersonal public, or of people who matter to him but little, he tries to find a recompense for the appreciation that is denied him by the person whose approval would mean more to him than that of the biggest crowds. (I am, of course, speaking in general terms, and not implying that *every* dog-lover, art-worshipper, statesman, or pub-habitué, seeks compensation for some human failure.)

Often those compensatory relationships—though never more than a second best—are crowned with success. While a man's wife may find him inconsiderate or a bore, conceited and irritating, his club-fellows or pub-cronies accept him gladly as a most desirable companion. If only his nagging spouse

## INTRODUCTION

could see him in all the glory of his popularity over a glass of beer, or on the bowling green! Unfortunately, she never beheld that sight. For the atmosphere of his relationship with her makes such easy-going and attractive behaviour on his part impossible. So his sense of frustration and resentment against her grows in the same proportion as his attachment to his pub, his stamp collection, or his Scottie.

## II

### NO LASTING SOLUTION FOR ANY RELATIONSHIP

The greater the importance we attach to a particular relationship, the more easily will it evoke both what is best and worst in us. It will offer us more intense joys and deeper contentment than would any of lesser importance, but also wider scope for misunderstandings and friction. For the more intimate a human link, the greater the number of factors that have the power to affect it: emotions as well as external circumstances, a mood, a sudden memory, a word here, a gesture there. From day to day, almost from minute to minute, something unforeseen might change it.

No one but ourselves can prevent such changes from being for the worse. And we can accomplish this only by constantly readjusting ourselves to the altered conditions of the situation. So long as the relationship is alive and has not stagnated to mere routine, there will hardly be a day without the necessity for such readjustments. Some of these may be easy, and performed almost automatically. Others, however, will prove difficult, even painful, and call for a mobilization of all that is best in us. (This theme is enlarged upon in the following chapters.) In even the most intimate and most intense relationships (particularly in these, in fact) there comes a day when we feel that their cultivation amounts almost to a process of initiation in which all our faculties have to be tested and retested mercilessly. And such testing might easily become a veritable purgatory. In moments such as these, it helps if we remind ourselves that, whereas frictions and misunderstandings come as of their

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own accord, harmony can be secured only at the price of our own effort. In a worthwhile relationship nothing can be acquired 'on the cheap'. And no solution can be evolved that, once found, is valid for ever.

### III

#### OF HUMAN BONDAGE

One further point ought to be mentioned at this stage, for it concerns one of the *general* conditions that require adjustments rather than *individual* adjustment. I am referring to intense absorption in another person.

Such absorption usually enriches us. But it can equally have the opposite effect, when it narrows and restricts us, until we are reduced to a state of tension which leaves room for nothing but the reflection cast by the person we love. No longer do we think our own thoughts, but try to think those of the loved one. Instead of feeling our own emotions we make every effort to fathom his or hers. Every word and gesture of the beloved becomes of greater significance to us than any of the great events that change the course of history. We become blind to the beauty and the misery of the world about us; all we can see is the quiver of a lip, the raising of an eye-lid. The universe has shrunk for us to the dimensions of the person who holds us in his, or her, bondage. While we delude ourselves that, living for that person alone, we have cast off the last vestiges of selfishness, in reality we are preoccupied with nothing but ourselves. The only things that matter to us are the thrills and agonies that the thralldom in which we are held brings with it.

Because of these phenomena, which most of us have witnessed, we understand the force of such expressions as 'the world well lost for love'. Instead of the calm and serene stage of being 'in love' there is nothing but fever. And so if any relationship calls for the most careful readjustments it is the blinding and stultifying state of bondage.

## CHAPTER I

### ARGUMENT

Is it right to deal with the subject of argument apart from that of conversation, and is not the former part of the latter? In theory, yes; in practice, only when argument is undertaken for a constructive purpose.

Conversation belongs pre-eminently to the intellectual sphere; argument, as usually indulged in, is a function of the emotions. On however intellectual and factual a level an argument may start, more often than not it develops into a contest in which the emotions completely override the intellect. Even when argument deals with plain facts (and not opinions or ideas) it can still rouse the emotions sufficiently to obliterate completely the facts that gave it birth.

'Well, there was rain during the night', we say at breakfast. 'No, there wasn't', comes the reply across the table. 'I tell you it rained.' 'And I tell you it didn't.' 'I heard it with my own ears.' 'What you heard must have been the wind.' 'Don't be ridiculous. I can tell the difference between wind and rain.' 'Evidently you can't.' 'Well, see for yourself: the grass is still wet.' 'Of course it is. Dew.' 'Dew my foot! I tell you I heard the rain with my own ears.' 'You!! You wouldn't have heard anything even if it had thundered. You snored so loudly, it kept me awake half the night.' '*I* snored? I never snore, and you know it.' 'Ha ha ha. You don't snore! So what, if I may ask, is responsible for my insomnia?' 'It is so like you to blame me for everything. If you hadn't insisted on drinking that black coffee, you wouldn't have suffered from insomnia.' 'Now you grudge me even my cup of coffee. I always knew there was no greater miser than you.' 'This from you? For whom I have done so much? If it weren't for me . . .' 'Oh, shut up. I have had enough of your constant grumbling and nagging. One morning it is the rain, the next . . .' 'Can't a fellow say what he likes in his own house?' '*Your* house, *your* coffee, *your* everything.'

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You have always been the most selfish person that ever lived . . .  
and so on and so forth.

. . . . .

It needn't be the rain. It can be the price of butter, or a river in America, or the year of the Armada, or the dress Mrs. Smith was wearing last night. Any fact, however trivial or easily ascertainable, can lead to an argument strewn with emotional dynamite, and spreading over territories quite unrelated to the original topic.

Why is this so? Because, as a rule, we argue not for the sake of arriving at truthful conclusions, but for the sake of giving vent to whatever grudges or pent-up emotions we may be nursing. We stick to our particular point not necessarily because we are convinced of its truth, or because, like Dr. Johnson, we derive profound pleasure from intellectual battle, but because it enables us to use opinions for inflicting emotional wounds on our opponent.

Argument about facts is the least profitable of all. Yet no other is equally popular. One look into a dictionary, time-table, or the day's newspaper, and all our doubts would be brought to an end. But if we did that, we should deprive ourselves of the ammunition with which to feed our animosities.

The province of genuine argument is ideas. Yet though ideas stir our emotions more deeply than facts, we can neither express nor justify them unless we deal with them on an intellectual level. This is precisely why argument that serves as a release for private grudges so rarely deals with ideas, and sticks to facts. Facts can be brandished about without having been translated into intellectual terms. By themselves they have next to no significance, and are the cheapest coin in human intercourse. That is why conversation at its lowest, gossip, is concerned exclusively with them or, rather, their distorted versions. Being innocent of intellectual merit, they can the more easily be turned into the emotional dynamite just mentioned.

. . . . .

If argument about mere facts has such a force, it is not surprising that argument about opinions can be charged with

## ARGUMENT

Disruptive power to break up almost any human relationship. But it must be repeated that it is not our actual opinions on birth control, private enterprise, or impressionist painting, that are so powerful, but our emotional attitude towards the person with whom we argue about any of those. The French impressionists or English economists provide us merely with a focal point for whatever irritation drives us into the argument. When that motive-power is absent, even a fundamentalist can argue with an evolutionist, without either of them ever raising his voice. When it is present, even people who in reality agree on the subject are driven into positions from which they defend not their own views but such as provide the easiest outlet for whatever passion moves them at the moment. It is then quite immaterial to them whether the opinions they express are their true ones, or diametrically opposed to these.

. . . . .

Profitable argument is impossible among people stirred by the wish to pay back old accounts. If people are not held together by a bond of love or sympathy that will override whatever animosity they may feel for one another, the only thing that can save their argument is a genuinely intellectual purpose.

Otherwise, argument fares best among people who are neutral to one another, and have no personal axes to grind. Complete strangers—such as may be thrown together on a railway journey, at a congress, or on a Brains Trust—will prove more successful in leading their argument to a fruitful conclusion than would people intimately known to one another.

An honest argument that aims either at the victory of the better side, or at a fair compromise, is the spice of conversation. In its purely emotional form, it belongs to that destructive species of pretence that plays such havoc in human relations.



## CHAPTER II

# MISUNDERSTANDINGS

### I

## THE DANGER OF SILENCE

As a rule relationships break up not because of the collision of mutually unsympathetic characters, but on account of the less spectacular undercurrents of misunderstanding. Of course, misunderstandings are not born of themselves. They are symptoms of some deeper cause. Unfortunately, such a cause is wont to disclose itself only when it is too late to remove it. So long as it exists, anything in a given relationship will provoke misunderstandings. To a word said in all innocence we instantly attribute a double meaning; and we construe some sinister meaning into every intonation, every gesture. Once the seed of mistrust (the classical cause for misunderstandings) has been sown, something dark and oblique creeps into a relationship. A remark about the most general theme takes on an intensely personal meaning, and we start searching for what we assume to have been the true motives the other person had for making it.

A great deal of misunderstanding and subsequent unhappiness could be averted if we had the courage to put our most intimate thoughts and reactions into words. Even partners in a perfect love-union often feel shy of doing this. Yet sooner or later their reticence may lead to irreparable maladjustment: first sexual, then emotional, and, finally, mental.

Let us take an example. A woman would like to give herself to her husband with complete self-abandon. At heart she is longing to reveal to him the full ecstasy which she experiences when they share their most intimate moments. But the conventions of puritanism or prudery in which she has been brought up—this applies particularly, though not exclusively,

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

to Anglo-Saxon countries—prevent her from doing this. Since the mind participates as much in the sex act as does the body, she never experiences its full joy. She feels deeply frustrated, and, in the end, develops a subconscious grudge against her husband. He on his part, if he is sensitive, is conscious of that grudge and of something lacking to make the relationship perfect. But since he is not aware of the true origins of his wife's condition, he is at a loss how to put things right.

Or it may be that one partner has a preference for certain aspects of the love game, and that these may even be indispensable to make the union perfect. Unfortunately either lacks the courage to mention this to the other. Or both may resent some other aspect, but, because of their reticence to put the objection into words, continue to acquiesce in it, at the same time developing an increasing grudge against it, and finally wrecking what otherwise might have been a happy love-match.

It would have been far better for both husband and wife if they had swallowed their sense of shame or pride, and discussed the relevant matters openly, instead of pushing them into the subconscious.

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What in this respect applies to erotic relationships, also applies fairly generally. For in a friendship or any close partnership or collaboration, a stifled grudge or secretly nursed resentment is more dangerous than one openly expressed. Only by putting it into clear words can we enable our partner to become fully aware of it, and remove its causes. Kept secret, our grievance thrives in a field fertilized exclusively by emotions. And this is the most difficult field to keep under control. Put into words, our grievance is transplanted into an intellectual soil, where it can be more easily controlled by reason.

## II

### THE DANGER OF WORDS

However important the 'what we do' is in human relations, the 'what we say' can be even more decisive. Words—those

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little stringlets of hieroglyphs or sounds—have the power to affect them more deeply than even the strongest emotions.

It is true: action speaks for itself. It is equally true that we can express an emotion or a thought without seeking verbal assistance. Yet we cannot formulate either with precision except through the medium of words. Only through words can we explain what motivated our emotions, or what significance they contain.

Words can greatly add to the importance of an action. But they can also detract from it. They can lend an added significance to a gesture; or can make it appear less significant than it had seemed at first. Thus words can remove the misunderstandings that the inevitable ambiguity of human behaviour is apt to create.

But if words can help, they can as easily hinder. It was mentioned before, and will be mentioned again, how dangerous silence and reticence can be, and how only words can clarify a difficult situation. They will, however, achieve their aim only if the motive behind them is a genuine desire for enlightenment: in short, for what reason commands. Unfortunately, it is more common for words to be the medium of our resentments and suspicions, our doubts, fears and jealousies. We speak not so much to clarify a situation as to express things that worry us, or those we should like to happen or not to happen. We also speak to make innuendoes, or to indulge in covert propaganda on our own behalf; we deliberately put double meanings into them; or use them to camouflage our true thoughts. In speech of this sort, words are not so much at the command of reason as of the inner chaos that deeply stirred emotions and the play of our imagination so easily produce.

So when exceptional difficulties in a relationship arise, it may be better to say little than much, provided complete taciturnity is avoided; and to say nothing that does not spring from the clear dictates of reason.

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

### III

#### SILENT DIALOGUES

It is not only the words spoken aloud that can undermine our relationships: even more harmful are the 'dialogues' that we carry on silently with ourselves—one of the more popular pastimes of most people. We must not confuse the 'silent dialogue' with thinking aloud: for it is not loud, and there is little thought behind it. We indulge in it because it offers us that opportunity for saying all the unpleasant 'truths' that we are afraid of communicating to the adversary for whom they are intended. (In 'silent dialogues' even our own wife, our best friend, is an adversary.)

Like the day-dream, the silent dialogue finds a fertile soil in even the least intelligent being (and especially there) because the merest speck of reality is enough to give it birth, and because it feeds on emotions unchecked by logic. And, like the day-dream, it soon gets out of hand and runs away with us. What is its main purpose? To make articulate our grudges and accusations against the person with whom they are concerned, as well as our self-justifications. So we put all our passion into the composition of arguments the logic (and pathos) of which should prove infallible to even our most heartless adversary. Were we actually given an opportunity for presenting him with those arguments, we should soon discover that, because of their lack of reality, they could be torn to shreds. If, however, they carried conviction, they would probably be so offensive as to cause more damage than good. Yet once a grievance has set the silent dialogue in motion, we go on and on spinning it, finding ever new facets to the original grievance and to the sins of our adversary!

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People particularly prone to indulge in silent dialogues are introverts, especially if they belong to the female sex. Those who are lonely, frustrated, or repressed, are more inclined to it than people who lead active lives, or are of a more expansive

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

nature. The character of the respective dispositions suggests what remedies will enable us to overcome the vice (for, like all forms of self-abuse, it is a vice) of silent dialogues. If mental self-control fails (and, admittedly, it is not easy), the only other resort is to steep ourselves deeply in some occupation that makes the utmost demands on our mind. Purely manual work would be useless, for it merely encourages day-dreaming, of which the silent dialogue is but an off-shoot.

Since the silent dialogue destroys our sense of perspective, and strengthens what in reality we wish to overcome, it naturally has unwelcome effects upon ourselves, and so indirectly upon the very relationship that has provoked it. But it has other unfavourable results as well.

Thoughts are spiritual realities. As such, they must be some sort of force. What the precise nature of that force is—whether magnetic, telepathic, or comparable with an exceptionally fine radio-wave—we do not know. But whatever it may be, like all similar forces, it must have some effect upon the person towards whom it is directed. The more sensitive that person, or the more he is 'en rapport' with us, the more strongly will he react to our thoughts. The particular mixture of thought and emotion that we produce in our silent dialogue is not likely to affect him favourably. Therefore it is an offensive weapon.<sup>1</sup>

Many a sage of the past has stated that if only men's thoughts were righteous and pure, hatred would depart from the world. An outpouring of thoughts, permeated with accusation, self-pity, resentment is, in its 'telepathic' effects, like an irritant acting upon the mind of its recipient. Certain clairvoyants have described such outpourings as 'a slimy grey matter'. At first it merely fills its progenitor, and then oozes into its victim. The plays of Strindberg, especially *The Father*, provide an excellent example of the tragic effects of such dialogues. The thoughts and emotions that are indulged in them encourage similar ones in the person on whom they are focused, and as a result a vicious circle is created.

<sup>1</sup> See also the section on "Psychic Good Manners", page 303.

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

### IV

#### SELF-PITY

First cousin to the silent dialogue is self-pity—one of the worst parasites on the body of human relations. Like its cousin, it derives its harmful strength from thriving in our semi-consciousness. Once we are fully aware of its presence, it is no longer difficult to rid ourselves of it—if only temporarily.

Self-pity's life-span would not be a long one if our imagination (polluted by emotions) did not abet it by instantly magnifying the original cause that had produced it. An unguarded remark, an impatient rejoinder, a word of criticism, will be served up to self-pity by the imagination in the shape of a major undeserved injury. 'What had you done to deserve such unfair treatment?' imagination whispers sympathetically to self-pity. 'Had you not shown exemplary patience and understanding? Yet your noblest motives have been deliberately misconstrued; your unselfish words interpreted as hypocrisy. When you gave sympathy, all you received in return was kicks.' Our self-pity groans and, raising its tear-filled eyes to heaven, exclaims: 'Is there no God to see the wrong I have been done?'

Of course our grievance may be fully justified. But to shed metaphorical tears over it is not the best way to claim our rights. What is wanted is an objective examination of all the relevant facts, and a decision based exclusively upon them. This, however, is a function of dispassionate reason, and can be performed only in the clear light of consciousness. Wallowing in self-pity is a more or less automatic function, unlit by the rays of consciousness. The sound reaction to the injury caused by unfair treatment is to try to overcome its effects as quickly as possible. Self-pity is a state to which we hold on masochistically, as though we derived pleasure from it. But it is an inverted pleasure and therefore morbid. So the sooner we rid ourselves of it, the more likely are we to overcome its causes.

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

### V

#### TURNING THE OTHER CHEEK

In our more intimate relationships most misunderstandings are the projection of something wrong in our own mental attitude. Because of it everything we do goes wrong. We genuinely try to do our best, yet find in the end that our efforts have worsened the situation: as if some wicked fairy had interfered with our efforts.

Since we are conscious of how good our intentions were, and do not believe in fairies, what is more logical than that we should blame the other person?

We do this primarily because of our inability to see ourselves with the eyes of the other person. We may try to be fair to him and to adopt his 'point of view'. Nevertheless we forget that he does not know all the secret recesses of our motives and reactions. He probably does not even know that our grudge has been caused by the wounds that his behaviour has involuntarily inflicted on us. We, on the other hand, are acutely aware of those wounds. And so we act in a manner for which there would be an excuse if the other person were equally conscious of our suffering. Since, however, he is not, he continues to behave in a way that to him may appear irreproachable, but that we consider callous.

If we are fair, we may suspect that we, too, may have inflicted wounds. But since we are never quite certain of another person's reactions, we may be in the dark as to what in our behaviour has caused them. We are like a swimmer who tries to reach dry land, yet with each stroke finds himself carried further into the sea.

The easiest way out of a situation of involuntary mutual misunderstandings would be to 'talk it all out'. But things may have gone too far for such candid interchange. Or the situation may have become too delicate for the bluntness of words. Or a statement of one's grievances, however honest, may merely widen the rift.

## MISUNDERSTANDINGS

The only other method that holds the promise of a more than short-lived success is to assume that we alone are responsible for the misunderstanding, and not to consider ourselves as injured. From this it follows that we must not attempt to claim what we consider our 'rights'. If this means turning the other cheek, and if it be retorted that such method may be all very well in theory but does not work in practice, the answer is that other methods work even less satisfactorily, and sooner or later lead to the complete breakdown of a relationship.<sup>1</sup>

If we act on the assumption that we alone are to blame, we naturally exonerate the other person, and cease attributing to him any bad motives. If we go a step further, and attribute to him nothing but good motives, something strange seems to happen to us: we begin to see things more dispassionately, as if some 'purification' had occurred in our spiritual state. Aspects of the other person's behaviour that formerly used to hurt us not only cease to be painful but might actually cause us pleasure.

. . . . .

What we have really done is to free our reason from the domination of our emotions, and substitute positive thought for emotional resentment and (presumably inflated) grudges. In this connection *positive* thought implies: to justify the behaviour of the other person rather than our own; to think of what is positive in him rather than of his negative features; to think not of how to achieve justice for ourselves, but of what, under the particular circumstances, the most decent thing would be for us to do; to dwell mentally on how we have benefited from the other person rather than on the reverse.

<sup>1</sup> I am speaking, of course, of relationships between individuals and not of those between groups of people; and of personal misunderstandings between them and not of social, economic or political disputes. Even within individual relationships, I am referring solely to those that go deeper than a casual acquaintanceship or liaison. For it is the most intimate bonds that call for the greatest individual effort. In casual contacts temporary expediency, conventions, and the like, may be found sufficient to ease moments of strain. They are not likely, however, to be of much assistance in relationships that really matter to us. These require a far greater honesty and heart-searching.



## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

It is very surprising how the change (from emotional concentration on our own rights and injuries, to positive thought) can improve a situation. Our mood grows calmer and more serene, and our sense of perspective is restored. What is even more surprising: the mood of the other person improves. It is as though the positive thoughts that we had been generating were sending out their invisible waves which initiate a similar process in that person. (See also: 'Psychic' Good Manners, in the chapter 'Tact and Good Manners' on page 303.)

### CHAPTER III

## ACTION THROUGH SILENCE

A woman knows that her husband is unfaithful to her. He knows that she knows it. Yet neither ever says a word about it. Both of them act as though they had agreed that his unfaithfulness is something never to be brought into the light of day. Though the subject means a great deal to them, they go on pretending (sometimes for years) as though it were non-existent. Do they act in the right way?

. . . . .

A man employs a servant. The servant is loyal, efficient, nothing is too much trouble for him. But his employer knows that the man helps himself to his cigarettes and to his wine. Yet he never says a word to the servant. Should the employer speak and put things right, or keep pretending that he notices nothing and retain a valuable servant?

. . . . .

A man and a woman, both of them married to someone else, have fallen in love and stilled their passion in one another's arms. They have found opportunities for doing it again and again. Yet when they meet casually, they never refer to their passion, as though their silence could rob the secret embraces of their reality. Would it not be better if they broke that silence?

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Why will even people who believe that only a heart-to-heart talk can clarify a difficult situation, or remove a misunderstanding, refuse to follow that principle? Often they are prompted by cowardice, and would rather shut their eyes and suffer in silence than face a difficult situation squarely.<sup>1</sup>

It would be wrong, nevertheless, to assume that, whenever we choose the technique of pretence and refuse to make a

<sup>1</sup> See Maxim 8 (Appendix).

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

clear-cut decision, we are actuated by nothing but cowardice, or that our behaviour is morally wrong.

By silently condoning something of which we do not approve at heart, we may avoid raising a difficult situation to that level of reason that permits only of a clear yes or no. Once a problem is dealt with on a level on which no other decision but that dictated by reason can be taken, we make it assume a greater importance than it might otherwise have possessed. By leaving it in the dark, we rob it of some of its acuteness.

The importance of a great many things in life depends not so much upon what is intrinsic in them as on what *we*, that is to say, our minds, make of them. Mind is a more powerful creator than matter. Until Harriet Beecher Stowe published her novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, there hardly existed in the American consciousness a sense of guilt towards the Negro slaves. The fertilizing powers of her mind turned a silently ignored (and therefore, practically non-existent) problem into one that roused the entire North American Continent and precipitated America's Civil War. Reversely, by minimizing an international incident, wise statesmanship can prevent public emotions from being inflamed and, possibly, provoking war. Our mind has indeed the power both to turn molehills into mountains and mountains into molehills.

The techniques of silence and pretence are not confined to adults. The fact that children, too, have recourse to it, suggests that it is in the nature of an instinctive mechanism of self-protection. Children who have together committed some misdeed are wont to refrain from ever mentioning it to one another, as though they were hoping that their silence would make the thing undone. Children who have inadvertently found out some unpleasant secret about their parents will probably never speak of it to one another. Their attitude is prompted by the hope that their silence might rob the secret of some of its reality. Alice in Wonderland was not the only child who believed that it is within our power to undo certain things already done.

## ACTION THROUGH SILENCE

Probably in everybody's life there arises a situation that is better left untranslated into clear words. It might be too embarrassing: and to suffer it silently may be preferable to having it exposed to the full light of a revealing statement. Or it might be too complex, and all efforts at unravelling it would merely lead to worse entanglements.

By remaining silent about a difficult or unpleasant situation and thus condoning it, we naturally do not solve it. At the best, we can achieve a compromise between what is feasible and what we really desire.

A compromise rarely represents an ideal solution. But compromise is not necessarily bad in itself. In relations between human beings, that is, between beings each of whom contributes his own individuality with all its idiosyncrasies, compromise plays a part that is as constant as it is important. The very nature of human relations implies a persistent give and take. So long as we do not live in some ideal world, this means compromise.

The most satisfactory relationships are those in which every difficulty can be solved by unreserved frankness and honesty. Some other relationships, in which this frankness and honesty are not possible, call for ever-recurring compromise. Others still have problems which are by their innate character insoluble. We can prevent their complete wreckage only by silence and pretence—provided that we do not fool ourselves, and remain conscious of what the true nature of our method is.

## CHAPTER IV

### PATIENCE

Only for some people is silence harder to bear than talking or listening. But almost everyone finds waiting more difficult than action. This is particularly the case where human relations are concerned. For events in which the interplay of individuality is not involved, it is more easy to muster patience. They probably depend upon forces either beyond our control—the weather or the seasons, politics or economics—or are too impersonal to leave much scope for our interference. When only one or two people are concerned, we feel that the outcome of an issue depends upon ourselves, and find it hard to delay our action.

Yet in human relations the choice of the right psychological moment is of paramount importance. ‘Those who know how to wait’, wrote that wise Frenchman, Saint-Evremond, ‘are usually paid with interest for their patience; for, in many things, delaying achieves more than strength.’ Delay is never more desirable than when strong emotions are at play. Borne by the impatient currents of such emotions, we are apt to precipitate a decision, irrespective of whether the conditions are favourable or not, and find in the end that we have burnt our boats. Had we been guided by patience, and not by passion that has led to action, everything might have been saved.

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Time has the miraculous propensity not only of healing but also of reconciling opposites, softening sharp contrasts, restoring a sense of perspective. By making use of it, many a human problem might be solved that otherwise defies solution. When our relations with another person are strained, passion is our worst adviser, reason our best. But whereas passion takes no heed of time, reason cannot thrive without it. So if in a moment

## PATIENCE

of crisis we wish to follow reason, we simply have to co-operate with time, and wait until it has placed the favourable moment at our disposal. 'Haste spoils the best-planned undertakings. Whereas patience ripens the most difficult plans and makes their execution easy.' (Charles Saint-Evremont.)

Nothing of value in human relations can be forced. The wished-for response from another person cannot be forthcoming until that person is ready to offer it to us, and his hand must not be forced. His (or her) readiness cannot be imposed from outside, but must evolve naturally from the maturing of that person's own mind and emotions. In human relations, precipitate growth—whether of feeling or thought—is rarely sound. It may bring forth instant results; but these are not likely to be long-lived.

But what are we to do if not we but the other person is impatient, and tries to impose upon us a decision for which we do not feel ready? Are we always to say no, and, possibly, sacrifice opportunities that may never occur again? If we are certain that an immediate response would be wrong, we can only plead for time, and try to reason with the appellant.

. . . . .

How can reason be expected to override impatience when passion is involved? Can much be expected from preaching gentleness to a tempestuous sea?

Indeed there is little a man can do whose impatience is lashed up by emotions, and whose only hope is reason. Better off is his fellow who relies upon faith. His faith will tell him that sooner or later higher assistance will be forthcoming. Faith in God has a compelling power of its own. Even the most unequivocal reliance upon reason cannot produce anything similar. The greater such reliance, the less will it involve the emotions. Faith, on the other hand, mobilizes the emotions at their deepest and purest, that is, when all egotism has been pared away from them. Part of the emotional ardour on which impatience thrives is harnessed to the service of faith. And once a man turns to God, his sense of time alters, and waiting becomes less arduous.

## CHAPTER V

### ON GIVING ADVICE

Are we *always* entitled to give advice; and *ever* to give advice that may imply interference with another person's freedom? Parents, teachers, trustees, or guardians, have a recognized right to guide those in their charge, irrespective of whether this conflicts with the latter's freedom of decision. So for them no problem need arise. It arises, however, constantly in relationships of equals, such as exist between husband and wife, friends, or business associates. Have any of them always the duty, or the right to give advice?

After a certain age (and experience) most people will have found that it is unwise to offer advice unless asked for it. But certain laws govern even advice given upon definite request. Thus it should not be given from the point of view of the person who gives it, but from that of the one who asks for it. If the matter upon which advice is sought concerns the adviser himself, only two ways are open to him: either to refuse the request; or to disregard his own interests and concern himself only with those of the advised. If for some reason this is impossible, no advice should be offered in any circumstances.

For at the best of times it is not easy to offer genuinely disinterested advice. Selfish motives have a way of intruding into even best-intentioned considerations, and only ruthless self-examination will enable us to ignore them. This is difficult to achieve if the interests involved on our part are strong; or if we are held by potent emotional ties to the person in search of our advice. Even the very best will then tend to colour their advice by what *they* would like to happen. A father may wish to see his son choose a particular career; a wife may feel it desirable that a particular feature in her husband's character should either be strengthened or weakened; a friend whose advice we seek may be hoping to see us take a particular political or business decision. Only if the wish of the adviser happens to coincide

## ON GIVING ADVICE

with the best interests of the advised person, is he entitled to take it into consideration. Otherwise, to colour the proffered advice by his own wish would imply interfering with the essential freedom of the advised person. And unless that person voluntarily puts that freedom into the hands of the adviser, this is one of the things we have no right to do.

If a man lets selfish motives intrude into the advice he gives, something strange is bound to happen. Sooner or later the advised person will make a decision opposite to the one suggested by the adviser, either of his own volition or because life will force it upon him. What is more, his decision will rebound unfavourably upon the adviser. It is as if fate herself paid him back.

On occasions, even the most selfless advice may prove to have been wrong, and the advised person has to suffer from its consequences. Is the adviser responsible in such a case, and must he blame himself? Or is he not rather justified in concluding that the unfavourable effects of his advice were inherent in the fate or life-pattern (Indians would call it karma) of the advised person? We cannot force fate nor the outcome of our actions. Since we are not their masters, we are responsible only for the motives that guided our advice. If our conscience declares these to be pure, we have no need to blame ourselves for something that obviously did not lie within our power. Otherwise no one would ever be able to offer his advice for fear of long-term consequences impossible to foresee at the time.



## CHAPTER VI

# TACT AND GOOD MANNERS

## I

### WHAT IS TACT?

A friend of mine is going through a very embarrassing experience. He feels deeply ashamed, and, whenever we meet, I naturally abstain from mentioning a subject that, though possibly nearest to his heart, is very painful to him. In my decision I am actuated by that sense of tact that is common to most grown-up people, though not necessarily to children. Though I may smugly congratulate myself on my tactfulness, my attitude is really not a positive one. I may have spared my friend embarrassment, but have I considered that he may possibly have wished to discuss the painful matter, so as to get it 'off his chest'? With all my solicitude for his feelings, I have been of no help to him.

Are we to conclude that tact is a merely negative quality? And must we define it as abstaining from saying or doing something that at a given moment might hurt the feelings of, or be embarrassing to, another person? Though such a definition would not be wrong, it includes but one aspect of tact.

I might adopt a different attitude towards my friend. Instead of merely avoiding the painful subject, I can lead our conversation into channels that will provide him with an easy opportunity for mentioning it. Thus I may be able to help him, without at the same time hurting his feelings.

Evidently tact can be more than a negative virtue.

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Practically all human situations gain by tactful handling. This is particularly true of those which do not admit of radical measures. Only the exceptional situations can be dealt with

## TACT AND GOOD MANNERS

drastically; the majority depend upon more imponderable action: little movements and counter-movements, veiled concessions, accents placed upon words rather than the words themselves. Tact is essential to their right application.

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The fact that among children tact is anything but common, suggests that it is an acquired quality, a by-product of experience. Like knowledge, we develop and refine it through experience. Nevertheless, at its best tact is inborn, when it is not so much the fruit of experience stored in the mind as the spontaneous response of the heart. Even before the mind has decided upon the right word or action, the heart has chosen it already.

Tact is a highly individual quality which no two people will demonstrate in an identical manner. Yet a few general principles can be laid down. For tact demands: treating others as more important than ourselves; giving expression to our appreciation of someone else's achievements without exhibiting peevishness if our own achievements are not acknowledged; refraining from stating unpleasant truths, and, if forced to do so, waiting for the right mental 'atmosphere' for their reception to be created; never implying our own superiority by saying 'I told you so' or by 'rubbing it in'; suppressing words, or anything in our behaviour, that may have embarrassing associations to someone else; abstaining from anything that might diminish the self-respect of the helped person; being self-effacing, though without false humility; in difficult situations waiting patiently for the right psychological moment, or trying to bring it about oneself.

No doubt the above list could be greatly extended. But no matter how many new points may be added to it, in practice, the most helpful expressions of tact are usually the unpremeditated ones. For they reveal that we have really identified ourselves with the other person and his problems.<sup>1</sup> And only

<sup>1</sup> Such identification is of course completely different from the egotistic attachment mentioned in the Introduction to this section, p. 276.

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when our entire being—and not merely the mind—is permeated with the mood of our fellow-being, do we know instinctively what word to say, what gesture to make.

### II

#### ARE GOOD MANNERS NECESSARY?

Only a few years back the above title would have seemed facetious. Even as recently as in 1939 good manners were considered indispensable to anyone who claimed to be civilized. They were on a par with such elementary matters as literacy or personal hygiene. But times have changed, and what but a few years ago was a truism, easily appears as novel.

Mankind could of course exist without good manners. We might possibly enjoy our dinner quite as much when eating it with a knife, and to the accompaniment of hearty belching, as when abstaining from the latter and replacing the former by a fork. The utilitarian value of good manners may seem very limited. We can neither sell nor eat them; we cannot turn them into a pair of boots or a skirt; we cannot even transform them into energy or heat. The only master they serve is human relations.

Since their exclusive purpose is to assist such relations, they naturally thrive best in periods in which exclusively human values are held to be quite as important as the more utilitarian ones. When life is assessed in terms of money, calories, and atomic energy, such values easily lose their *raison d'être*.

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Wars and their aftermaths always lower the standards, and coarsen the grain, of human behaviour. They are inimical to all those refinements that we call good manners. Does this absolve us, however, from the duty of recapturing them? Must we not counter each levelling-down by at least a corresponding levelling-up?

In all the countries affected by the Second World War, the generation too young to remember 'pre-war' days has been quite unconscious of the prevailing deterioration of manners.

## TACT AND GOOD MANNERS

Its inability to measure the present by the past made it believe that in an age of 'democracy' and 'equality', the rough-and-ready manners brought about by the war were the only valid ones. It had no means by which to gauge the possible benefits to be gained by better ones. For if they did but know it, good manners have a greater utilitarian value than the makeshift ones of post-war days.

Good manners render human intercourse easier and more pleasant, help to eliminate unnecessary friction, and prevent wastage of mental and emotional energy. By automatically erecting inner barriers between those less pleasant of our reactions of which we feel ashamed afterwards, they save us from ourselves. They can, of course, lose their significance by becoming an end and not merely a means. In eighteenth-century France good manners obtained a higher price in the market of human relations than true qualities of heart. We may ask therefore whether this was not partly responsible for the violence and blood-thirstiness that subsequently accompanied the reaction of the French masses against everything good manners symbolized.

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Manners are not so much what we do as the way of doing it. Some of the continental habits that we were wont to regard as 'good manners' were nothing but superficial conventions which often went hand in hand with extremely bad manners. Among the best known were: kissing ladies' hands on all suitable and unsuitable occasions; men letting a lady always walk on their right; insisting upon the other person passing first through a door; the clicking of heels by the Germans, and their mania for addressing everyone, from a Field Marshal to the widow of a chimney-sweep, with their full 'professional' title.

Good manners are more than formulas applied slavishly and without discrimination. What they should denote is not the thoughtless exhibition of a particular social convention, but the individual desire to act in a way that not only causes no offence to others, but also gives them pleasure.

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

### III

#### A CASE OF GOOD MANNERS

The person with the best manners it has been my privilege to know came—perhaps somewhat surprisingly—not from the Faubourg St. Honoré, nor from the diplomatic or aristocratic worlds of the Continent, but from a plain English middle-class family. He was only nineteen when I first made his acquaintance. We became, and remained, close friends until fourteen years later, when he was killed in France in 1940. He was gay, spontaneous, with an irrepressible zest for life, deeply preoccupied with spiritual as well as political and social problems; an exceptionally hard worker. At an early age he entered Parliament, where he soon became one of the Members most popular with both sides of the House.

When I lived in London, he would once or twice each week share a meal with me. In spite of the frequency of those occasions, he never let one pass without immediately writing me a brief note of thanks. Similarly, when in later years he paid me regular visits in the country, he never missed sending me afterwards his 'bread and butter' letter. Each of these letters was quite individual, and its courtesy was spiced by flashes of humour and irony. Since he knew that I greatly enjoyed his brilliant gift of irony, he always took the trouble to give expression to it even in letters that might have been regarded as a mere convention. I have no doubt that his 'bread and butter' letters to others were couched in terms that expressed a different quality in him that happened to appeal to his respective hosts.

Though overflowing with ideas, and a brilliant talker, he was an even better listener. While not keeping his own light under a bushel, he invariably made you feel that what you were saying was important, and that you were a person of consequence. Whatever subject held your attention at any given moment, he instantly made it his own, and went out of his way to make his contribution to it. After he had left you, you felt a far worthier person than you had ever suspected yourself of being.

## TACT AND GOOD MANNERS

During the fourteen years of our friendship he had never let a single Christmas or birthday of mine pass without sending me his little present and letter of good wishes. Yet not only was he not rich, but had to work extremely hard—usually at night—to supplement his parliamentary pay by writing political articles. His presents were inexpensive—a pocket diary, an ash-tray, a wastepaper basket—but were always something you needed, and had meant to buy yourself. He knew what presents to choose because he had a gift for ascertaining your needs and preferences.

I was, of course, not the only beneficiary of his generosity. One year I visited him in his little flat in Westminster just before Christmas. He was surrounded by scores of purchases—from calendars and books to lampshades and coloured pencils—and was busy packing them, writing labels, crossing out names from an almost endless list sticking out from one of his pockets.

A cynic may possibly say that my friend was only wasting time and money, both of which might have been made better use of. Is that true? Conscious of the importance of good manners, my friend had arranged his life in such a way that he always found time and opportunity for giving them expression. He was invariably on time for his engagements, and was tidy in his habits. Having little inclination for the types of entertainment on which modern people waste so much of their time, he never seemed short of time. He very rarely visited cinemas, or attended parties and other social functions, and, except for his passion for country walks, was indifferent to sport.

There was more than one explanation of Ronald Cartland's good manners. (He was Member for the King's Norton division of Birmingham.) He had a profound respect for the human personality, whether represented by his charwoman, the Foreign Secretary, the man from whom he bought his evening paper, or a friend; he perceived that because life was difficult and not always pleasant, it was his duty to make it as attractive as lay within his own means; he took nothing for granted, especially not the gifts that fate was offering him, and felt that the least he could do was to give positive expression to his sense of indebtedness; and, last but not least, he thoroughly

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

enjoyed the pleasure both he and his friends derived from his good manners. (Whether his simple but profound religious faith had anything to do with these, I do not know. But I suspect that there was some link between the two.)

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Some people hold that while good manners are justified in intercourse with those who are comparative strangers, there is no need for them among persons who know one another intimately. No doctrine could be more foolish. It is precisely the day-to-day intimate relations that produce most opportunities for painful friction and misunderstanding. Good manners cannot always eliminate either—especially not if fundamentals are touched. But while the crises that arise from fundamentals occur only rarely, little frictions crop up almost each day. If every time our newspaper had been requisitioned by another member of the family, we gave instant rein to the emotions provoked by his misdeed, life would soon become unbearable.

The man without good manners has to exercise a great deal of self-control and effort to suppress momentary resentment. Good manners, especially if they have become deeply ingrained, would have enabled him to overcome the situation quite naturally, and without a similar expense of mental energy.

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If a man is really civilized, good manners are instinctive, practically his second nature. When a fellow-traveller on the bus inadvertently steps on my most sensitive corn and makes me wince with pain, my primitive reaction would be to lose my temper and knock him down, or, at least, tell him bluntly what I think of him. (This, in fact, is the sort of reaction I have often observed in Germany, even in pre-Hitlerian days.) If I am civilized (which, according to the dictionary, means: reclaimed from savagery), such a reaction is spontaneously mastered, and instinctively turned into good manners. I merely say, 'Never mind', or 'It couldn't be helped'.

It takes more than one generation to turn good manners

## TACT AND GOOD MANNERS

into second nature. Once this has happened, they are more than social conventions, and are indistinguishable from humaneness. What Ronald Cartland epitomized was not so much good manners as humaneness and civilization.

### IV

## 'PSYCHIC' GOOD MANNERS

Even more important than ordinary good manners can be that subtle version of them which we are almost entitled to call 'psychic'.

Some people react even to the thoughts and hidden moods of others. The sensitiveness that enables them to do this has in it many marks of a psychic faculty. If we possess that faculty, we 'sense' the inner attitude of another person towards ourselves even if he has not betrayed it by a single word or gesture. He may in fact try to camouflage it, by hiding love behind a show of indifference, displeasure behind courtesy, antipathy behind a façade of politeness. He may succeed in deceiving ninety-nine out of a hundred people, but he will fail to do so when he encounters the one person endowed with a super-sensitive psyche.

In such a psyche likes evoke likes. Sympathy camouflaged as indifference will strike in the sensitive person the strings of sympathy. No amount of politeness on the part of a person trying to hide his dislike or irritation will stop corresponding emotions from being evoked in the other one. Even if it is not precisely the identical emotion, and may take simply the form of a bad mood.

None of us has the power to prevent even the worst possible reactions from being awakened in us. But if we possess 'psychic' good manners, we will not only be conscious of their presence, but also of what has caused them, and keep them under control. Blind rage or jealousy whose violence makes us almost unaware of them, are hard to master. A mood, however unfavourable, of which we are conscious, can be sublimated and thus moderated.

People with the requisite sensitiveness usually can exercise



## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

it whether it acts as a 'receiving set' or a 'transmitting' one. Thus if they replace their bad mood by a better one—one of patience, understanding or sympathy—they may be able even to transform the original negative sentiments of the other person.

Whether a negative psychic condition originates within ourselves, or is the outcome of an unfavourable 'message' received from a person to whom we react very sensitively, its effects are the same: we are put into a condition in which it is hard to give of our best to our relations with others. Since 'psychic' good manners help us to overcome those effects, and to replace them by something far better, their cultivation is justified not only in the interests of altruism but in self-interest as well.

## CHAPTER VII

# JEALOUSY

Of all human passions none blinds more, eats deeper into the soul, is harder to cure than jealousy. Some of the world's greatest literature, from Homer to Tolstoy, from Euripides to Shakespeare and Balzac, would not have seen the light of day if human beings were less easy tools in the grip of jealousy.

A man can forget his hunger, his sexual urge, his ambitions; he can master his impatience and his anger. From jealousy he can find release not even for a single moment. The accumulated wisdom of many ages, with all that philosophers, saints and psychologists have said on the subject, offers no guidance to the man tormented by jealousy. All he can do is to sing with Solomon, 'Jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire' (*Song of Solomon* viii. 6), and comfort himself by the thought that even the saints of earliest days knew that 'jealousy is the rage of a man' (*Proverbs* vi. 34). Drug-addicts, nymphomaniacs, kleptomaniacs, and people suffering from homicidal tendencies are known to have been cured. Has any doctor ever cured a man of jealousy?

According to reason, jealousy takes us nowhere and makes things worse than they were. Reason is perfectly right and all experience confirms its verdict. But when jealousy rages, the voice of reason is like the squeak of a mouse, and cannot be heard through the tempest of emotions. So we might as well discount reason.

Perhaps willpower will take us further. For does it not combine the functions of both reason and emotions? Yet even the strongest have found that when their willpower is matched with jealousy, it soon crumbles to dust. Is there then nothing a man can do to master jealousy?

As in all personal dilemmas where purely human resources are of little avail, faith provides the last hope. Even the most ardent faith will not rid a man altogether of his jealousy. But

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

at least it can give him the hope that higher powers will either give him the strength to overcome it, or remove the causes that have led to it. Thus in faith he can find that modicum of solace which neither reason, willpower, nor any kind of distraction can offer him.

As a rule, jealousy assails us only when we love; and the more we love the stronger is our jealousy. Yet in such a state we are concerned not so much with the object of our love, as with ourselves; with our feelings for it; our desire to possess it entirely for ourselves, our inability to share it with anyone else, our fear of losing it. Jealousy is indeed a purely egotistic sentiment.

Though higher help may not be forthcoming in the form in which we expected it, we shall at least have turned to God—something beyond ourselves—and away from our preoccupation with our own ego and its troubles.

All turning to God helps to restore the sense of perspective that we lose whenever we are held in the grip of a strong passion. If nothing else is gained, His greatness alone reduces in our eyes the magnitude of the problem that worries us. And once this is achieved, even jealousy finds itself robbed of some of its merciless power over us.

## CHAPTER VIII

### FEAR OF PUNISHMENT

From time immemorial fear of punishment has profoundly influenced the behaviour of men towards one another. Fear of punishment by water or fire, illness or death, the gods, or man himself, has always restrained humans from giving vent to their baser instincts.

The Jews of the Old Testament may have loved Jahveh, but their fear of Him was greater than their love. Having from childhood the idea of an avenging God instilled into them, fear rather than righteousness kept them from transgressing against the law. In spite of its founder who seldom dealt with negatives—and fear is a negative quality—Christianity has taken over a great deal of the Jewish concepts of divine punishment. It has modified them in many aspects, and mellowed them in some; but for the best part of two thousand years it has used the threat of hell and eternal damnation as one of its favourite weapons for curbing sin and encouraging virtue. It may seem strange that a doctrine emanating from the gospel of love and forgiveness could have been distorted to so great an extent. In its heart the Christian Church must have known that an appeal to fear is unworthy of the divine son-hood of man, and that it is of no spiritual value. Yet, as though uncertain of the efficacy of love, the Church compromised with the darker powers within man, and paid more attention to them than to those that were more in tune with the spirit of the Man whose name it adopted.

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Fear, in whatever form or guise, has rarely (if ever) produced great works in the domains of thought, literature, art, or music. These are invariably the outcome of love—spiritual, human, or, as so often in art, sensuous. Is it altogether accidental that, unlike many other civilizations of the past, that of the Hebrews has left few monuments of artistic beauty? The fear of Jahveh

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

would seem to have been less of an inspiration to the artist than the Christian love of God.

Whereas the forbidding castles of the Middle Ages with their gigantic walls are a product of fear, the mediaeval churches, statues and paintings, are expressions of love. However fearful some of the doctrines of the Church, most of the works of Christian art, from Giotto to Fra Angelico, were permeated by the artist's personal love of God and his Son. Even the magnificent Great Wall of China—the most grandiose monument to human fear—is as nothing when compared to the Temple of Heaven in Peking, and to the other Chinese temples, statues and paintings whose inspiration was love. Would the Taj Mahal have become one of the most beautiful gems of architecture if the motive for its creation had been fear and not love?

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In spite of the gospel of love as propounded by Jesus, Buddha and other spiritual leaders, fear of punishment has remained one of the decisive factors in human make-up. Even today, when fear of divine punishment may no longer influence our behaviour, a more profane fear still determines a great deal in it. It is in fact one of the foundations of all criminal law. And we must admit that without it there would be more dishonesty, cruelty, robbery, loose living, and other forms of sin and misdemeanour.

Fear is often the original cause of our blameless conduct. But gradually such conduct turns into habit, and we are no longer aware of what had originally exercised a restraining influence upon us. Having learned from childhood that this or that misdeed would bring about painful retribution, we in the end put aside all thought of committing it. Does this, however, mean that we have overcome completely the potential weakness in our character that would have induced us to commit the misdeed? If suddenly we were to find ourselves in circumstances enabling us to perform a misdeed advantageous to ourselves, and left unpunished—should we still refuse to commit it? If fear of punishment were our only deterrent, there would be

## FEAR OF PUNISHMENT

nothing to hold us back. Evidently good conduct, achieved merely through fear, has little moral value.

Fear of punishment undoubtedly teaches some people honesty. Others, however, it teaches all the subterfuge and cunning necessary for the unpunished achievement of predatory ends. Others still, it teaches hypocrisy. This is particularly true of people who, for one reason or another, find it impossible to lead sexual lives that accord with either the conventions or the laws of the moment. Whatever anti-social tendencies exist in certain people are neither eliminated nor reformed by fear of punishment, in fact new ones are added to them. As a basis for good conduct, fear is never more than a second best.

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It may be true that the savage, the child, and the subnormal person, cannot absorb the principles of right conduct without an appeal to their sense of fear. But what is justified in their case is far from being right for the average 'normal' adult with power to discriminate between good and bad. In his case such appeals easily become degrading. They focus his attention on the bad, instead of strengthening his awareness of, and desire for, the good. The Nazi State was built on fear, and so are all Police States—with what results we know by now.

So long as we set out to develop right conduct through fear, and do much less to encourage the desire for good, inherent as it is in most human beings, we have to rely chiefly upon the imperfect organization of criminal law and the inadequate system of punishment. And we also have to spend fabulous sums of money, effort, and ingenuity, on curbing preventable crime. The more desirable way, surely, would be to devote part of these efforts and money to the more positive objects of improving conditions where these foster crime; to bring about greater general enlightenment; and in every possible way to lend support to those spiritual factors in life that form the safest foundation of morality.

## CHAPTER IX

# HUMILITY

A subject on which most people are apt to disagree violently is that of 'undeserved' suffering. Is such suffering due merely to accident or 'bad luck'? Or does it imply the existence of a deity, or fate, who punishes us for some misdeeds of which we are not aware? Or is it, as the East believes, the price we have to pay for debts incurred in a previous existence on earth? However much people may disagree on this matter, they are more likely to agree on one that is the outcome of it: namely the purpose of suffering. Except for the extreme rationalist, most of us are inclined to believe that its purpose is to teach us certain lessons, lessons that in a condition of pride, self-complacency, or indifference, we are not likely to learn.

Much of what we know about the good, we learn from our acquaintance with evil. If we had never beheld the amount of poverty, suffering and unhappiness in the world, we should hardly be aware of the importance of charity and loving-kindness. So long as we do not realize the evil of stupidity, dirt, or disease, we cannot appreciate the benefits of intelligence, cleanliness and health.

No matter how stoical our disposition, we all consider suffering as an evil, and thus imply that it may serve as a door to the good. Of course, not all suffering teaches us lessons of spiritual significance. There is little to learn from an aching tooth, except the address of the nearest dentist. Yet it would be wrong to imagine that physical suffering cannot offer us its own important lessons. Prolonged physical suffering, if it does not embitter us, can teach us patience and compassion.

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Indeed the chief lessons we learn from suffering is compassion. For we cannot feel real compassion ('suffer-with') unless we first suffer ourselves. The lesson of compassion always goes

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hand in hand with, or, rather, is preceded by, that of humility. A man suffering from great mental affliction soon learns to lose his former pride, and acquire humility.

Whether or not (some would have it so) humility is queen among the virtues, there is no doubt that without it there is little prospect for happy human relations. For these must be based on mutual respect; and there can be no respect unless there is first humility. The man who is humble will never be dogmatic or force his views upon others: he is too conscious of his limitations.<sup>1</sup>

Few characters in history exemplified more glaringly than Hitler the principles most different from those of humility. It is interesting to note that, in spite of all the adoration he evoked in the German masses and his closer followers, he never enjoyed satisfactory relations with anyone, and had no friends. Autocrats (whether their name be Hitler, Nero, or Napoleon) are condemned to loneliness. It is not their exalted position that is responsible for this, but their lack of humility, making natural human intercourse impossible. Even men who have reached the highest pinnacles of fame, but have retained a speck of humility, have often enjoyed the happiest of friendships.

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Some people are wont to mistake humility for a sense of inferiority. Though, viewed superficially, the two have certain features in common, they are as far apart from one another as could be imagined. Once again Hitler and the nation that exalted him provide us with a helpful illustration. Hitler would have been unthinkable anywhere outside Germany. For the Germans, while afflicted as no other nation with an inferiority complex, seem incapable of humility. It was quite natural to them to worship a leader who rose on megalomania and pride. And like their own megalomania, his sprang from a morbid inferiority complex.

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, the word 'humble' is used in its true sense, shorn of the adventitious meaning of 'obsequiousness' that has somehow clung to it.



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Humility is always of benefit to human relations, a sense of inferiority is not. Let me make this point clearer: true humility does not originate in a depreciation of our own qualities—always a negative attitude—but in an active acknowledgement of the qualities of other people. This acknowledgement leads automatically to a building of bridges between them and ourselves, of links such as could never be established out of a sense of inferiority. For that sense centres in an assumption of our (true or imaginary) shortcomings, not as related to the virtues of other people, but only as related to our own wishdream vision of ourselves.

This is a very important difference. It indicates that, whereas humility is of a positive social significance, a sense of inferiority is essentially egotistic and anti-social.

Besides its social implications, humility has spiritual ones. The truly humble man is what he is because he is profoundly aware of his own smallness in the eyes of God and of the world created by God. He need not be blind to his own achievements, but he knows how little these count when placed against the majesty of the surrounding world and the mystery of life. The greatness of what he beholds about him fills him not only with humility, but also with the zest and courage to emulate it, for it is a challenge to him.

The man with a sense of inferiority is too much preoccupied with his own imperfections to measure them against the realities of the surrounding world. He is essentially a coward; and, when forced to accept life on its own terms, jerks himself out of his fear and assumes the heroic pose. Since his courage is not genuine, he does not feel sure of himself. He overacts, and seeks acknowledgement not so much through his own deeds as through the applause of others. Success easily goes to his head, and makes him proud, dogmatic, and aggressive. The humble man's success may give him quiet satisfaction but detracts in no way from his humility. For he feels that the merit entailed is certainly not his alone.

Finally, the sense of humility and the sense of inferiority differ in their origins: the latter is chiefly the outcome of some

## HUMILITY

early frustration of which the victim was not conscious, and is, so to speak, imposed upon him like an injury sustained in an accident. Humility, unless inborn—a privilege of the few—is the fruit of conscious experience and, more often than not, it is engendered by suffering. Expressing victory over the ego, it is a deliberate submission to life. The sense of inferiority, going hand in hand with an assertion of the ego, leads to fear of life.

The sequence: suffering-humility turns a man into a desirable companion. The sense of inferiority which, incidentally, need be related to no suffering whatever, makes a man very poor company. But then while such a sense is merely a psychological trait, humility is a moral quality.

## CHAPTER X

# THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE

## I

### DIFFICULTIES OF OUR TIMES

Under the ever-increasing strain of modern life even the happiest personal unions are often tried to breaking point. This is especially true of marriage. The dissolution of many a modern marriage has been brought about not so much by personal differences as by the unsettling influence of external difficulties. If in the more peaceful days of our grandparents and parents a marriage was uneasy, this was usually due to purely personal causes. Since 1939 to these causes have been added countless others over which the individual has next to no control. Whatever psychological maladjustment may exist is aggravated by stresses that force themselves upon husband and wife from outside. From 1939 till 1945 there were the anxieties brought about by the war, and, since then, those caused by the growing political disunity of the world.

Both sexes share equally in those new difficulties. The husband is a victim of the prevailing economic dislocation, and of unprecedented restrictions that at each step interfere with his professional activities. The woman fights an even more arduous battle on what has become a veritable domestic front. How is she to make the rations stretch over a whole week; where is she to find domestic help; or clothes for the children; or enough fuel to cook the dinner and keep the house warm; how is she to replace the tattered linen and a hundred other things so necessary in the house?

Both she and her husband are more and more overcome by a sense of weariness, such as they had never known before 1939. Small incidents at home or in the office, that formerly they would hardly have noticed, assume exaggerated proportions;

## THE IMPORTANCE OF CHANGE

minor disagreements upset them; to control their tempers they have to expend far more nervous energy than they have ever had to summon up in the past. The wife notices how impatient her husband is, how little sympathy he shows for her worries. He, on his part, suddenly discovers how old his woman looks, how hard her features have become. Could it possibly be the same creature whom twenty years earlier he had considered the most desirable one on earth? How she nags; how she dramatizes the slightest difficulty cropping up in the kitchen; how little help he gets from her in his worries!

The fact is that both are worn out. They no longer possess the charity that at one time was generated by their love, and that might enable them to approach one another's troubles with greater understanding. Besides, in their gradual decline, they have both lost most of their sexual attractiveness for one another. This reciprocal appeal alone used to forge a strong bond between them; sexual release brought them close together, and provided them with added mental and nervous resources.

Were they but younger, they might find escape and refreshment in extra-marital adventures. For some of the younger people sexual promiscuity has indeed become one of the most common forms of escape and release. But when you have been married for twenty years, and have led a pretty 'decent' life, the idea of promiscuity and the whole disorganization required for putting it into effect has not the same appeal to you that it might have had years ago. And naturally, the range of opportunity declines with increasing years.

So what is left? Drink? Betting? The pictures? Well, they have tried these. Though they may have got a few hours' exhilaration from them, in the end they still leave one dissatisfied. Anyhow, a more serious-minded man cannot find true release through such means.

# PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

## II

### DESIRABLE CHANGE

Even in more normal times it is the day-to-day routine that is most dispiriting to a person. Doing each day the same things in the same way; seeing the same faces and surroundings; talking about the same subjects—all these easily leave a man dissatisfied, and age him prematurely. Hence the enormous importance that questions of leisure and holidays have assumed in recent years. Yet can a fortnight's, or even a month's, holiday counter-balance the progressive decline of the remaining eleven months?

The problem we have to tackle is not so much one of holidays and leisure as of change—change of environment, people, interests. Such a change may, but need not, imply a holiday. It is in fact far more likely to recharge the rundown mental and nervous batteries if it serves a distinct purpose and calls for a definite occupation.

Whenever in the past I took part in congresses and conferences, it struck me how much more companionable, alive, and level-tempered were those attending them than they were wont to be when met during the rest of the year, doing their routine duties. Usually such assemblies would take place in some town (or country) away from one's habitual residence. Their novelty, as well as the 'newness' of the place in which the meetings were held, and of the hotel, college, or home, in which one lived for a week or a few days, all enabled one to dissociate oneself from what had become stale in one's normal routine. Then there were the new faces, the new time-table embodying new routines and, above all, the interest in the subject to which the particular conference was dedicated. Energies that normally had been either frustrated or expended upon daily frictions, now could be directed into a creative effort outside of one's routine job. Often towards the end of some such meeting I would hear people say, 'I feel much more hopeful and invigorated than I did before coming here. I only wish I knew how to carry the spirit of zest and mutual understanding of the last few days into my daily routine.'

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What matters most about occasional meetings between people held together by some particular interest—it may be social, religious, artistic or literary questions, stamp-collecting, gardening, or the establishment of a new museum—is the element of change and the spirit of fellowship fostered by them.

The same is true of less ambitious occasions on which people can shake off their daily routine, and find sublimation for energies that otherwise would either remain frustrated or be used in wrong directions. They may meet for a few days' fishing or stalking, or a few hours' hiking or bowling; to exchange ideas on some hobby; or to foster some cause outside of their purely professional interests. They may not achieve anything more creative on such occasions than to hear themselves talk or even sing, to enjoy new scenery and the company of people whom they had not seen for a week, a month, or a year. But even if that is all, they have found means for release. A day's outing with the British Legion or the Women's Institute can be quite as beneficial to those who take part in it as a week's congress on modern music in Salzburg or on religious co-operation at Oxford. For those for whom mere change without a creative purpose is not enough, there are the countless social, scientific, artistic and similar part-time jobs.

### III

#### NEGATIVE CHANGE

Desire for change as a true recreation is not identical with the one that comes from sheer restfulness and inner emptiness. Ceaseless search for new companions, new entertainments, new sensations, is a very marked symptom of the twentieth century. Few nations seem to be given more to it than the Americans. You are invited for a weekend in the country, and look forward to a few peaceful days away from town. But hardly have you arrived in the comfortable house with its restful garden, than friends arrive for drinks. After a few minutes one of them invariably suggests calling on some mutual friends who have some novelty to show—a new car, radiogram, dog, or baby. You drive for twenty miles to meet people whom you have no

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particular desire either to know or to disturb in their weekend peace. You stay with them for hardly half an hour when the host suggests visiting the pictures in the nearby town, or attending some meeting. You spend an hour or two at the new place, and then find yourself whisked away to visit some other people for drinks or, maybe, supper. But before you reach your bed in the comfortable room of the comfortable house of your own friends, you have probably visited some bar or club. Next day will be more or less the same.

It will be more or less the same irrespective of the income-group your hosts belong to. There will be drinks with some friends of theirs, and the pictures, and more drinks, and hot dogs at a cafeteria, and then coca cola, at one place, and, maybe, sundae at another.

But we need not visit the U.S.A. to find restlessness and the mania for change for its own sake. There is the British pub-crawler and his continental brother, shifting from café to café, from piazza to bar, and back again. Unlike purposeful change that is refreshing to the mind, such constant search for new sensations frays the nerves. It is an escape both from inner vacuity and from reality. And, finally, it is an admission of our inability to derive contentment from the things that call for the exercise of our mind and our human qualities.

### IV

#### RELIEVING THE MIND

Everything we do that is not purely instinctive or automatic is a projection of our mind. This is particularly true of actions connected with problems that arise in human relations. They may seem to mobilize nothing so much as our emotions—of love, dislike, anxiety, hope, or suspicion—yet, what finally has to come to terms with them is our mind. Neither emotions by themselves, nor the will, can solve them. They have to be guided by the mind.

The greater the pressure of such problems upon the mind, the more are we dominated by the mind in our actions, words, and general bearing. A mind that dwells too much upon some

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personal human problems soon becomes a mind in bondage. The stronger the bondage, the more will the mind run in circles. Instead of seeing the problem as a whole, and from its different aspects, it gets caught in one particular and ever-narrowing angle of it. To regain its sanity, a mind, thus caught, must first find release. Mere change, irrespective of its nature, may prove insufficient to achieve this; and even during sleep the mind will not be completely free from the problem that enslaves it.

There is one surprisingly simple, almost trivial, method that rarely fails to bring some measure of relief to the mind: a brisk walk in the country. Whatever our problem, such a walk invariably acts as an opiate as well as a mental cleanser. There are several reasons for this. First: such obvious factors as physical exercise and fresh air. Though only secondary, they must not be underestimated. Even purely mental and psychological conditions do not remain unaffected by physical influences, whether these be favourable or not. Then there is the rhythmical movement of our body. This exercises a minor counterbalance to the disorderly, not to say chaotic, meandering in which an enslaved mind is wont to move. The walk brings us into close proximity with the outside world in all its variety—the vast expanses of the sky, dark earth, green fields, grazing cattle, the man behind the plough. Seen against their background, we begin to realize that our problem is not the centre of the world, as it had seemed before. Such realization alone reduces it to less inflated proportions.

But more potent than any of these factors is the influence of Nature herself. Nature has her own immanent wisdom, far beyond that to be found in another human being. If we are responsive to her, we absorb something of that wisdom—less pedestrian, more timeless than any human councils—widening our sympathies and deepening our understanding. And once we are impregnated by a spirit of understanding and sympathy, even the weariest mind finds some measure of peace.



## CHAPTER XI

# RELEASE THROUGH SOLITUDE AND THOUGHT

### I

#### ‘SOLITUDE PREGNANT WITH THOUGHT’

Besides purposeful change there is one other form of release which is not escape: it is that of cultivated solitude. Modern life does not offer as many opportunities for it as for fellowship—both of the right and the wrong kind. But fellowship, as examined in the preceding chapter, calls for a certain amount of organization, co-operation, and, possibly, expenditure of money. Release through solitude calls for none of these. Though it is open to all, there are few things modern man knows less about than how to cope with occasional solitude. If perchance he finds himself alone, he feels restless, as though he had been placed in a vacuum which he must fill at all costs. If there is nothing better at hand, he achieves this by means of the radio or the crossword puzzle—preferably both at the same time, or with anything else that will help him to forget that at last he can indulge in the luxury of thought.

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The opportunity for thought, though not the only gift that solitude has to offer us, is the most precious one. And, like most of such gifts, it is usually wasted. For we do not know how to make use of it.

Thought at its best is a combination of three arts (or stages): observation, thinking, and meditation. These arts are not included in the normal school curriculum; yet without at least some knowledge of them, it becomes difficult to view clearly the true nature of the problems that confront us, or to gain a right sense of perspective in a given difficulty.

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Thought represents one of the chief batteries for storing up our best and least transient inner resources. But, unless a man be a mystic or yogi, he finds it impossible to charge that battery if he is not alone. Since thought at its best must be dispassionate and objective, the very presence of people who affect us emotionally—whether favourably or otherwise—is inimical to it. Solitude is its ideal precondition.

Those who seek 'solitude pregnant with thought'—as a Chinese sage called it—know of its remarkable effects: of the clarity of vision it creates, the calm sense of achievement that comes with it, and, finally, the state of serenity it induces.

## II

### THE MAN WHO FOUND CONTENTMENT THROUGH SOLITUDE

I could mention several examples of people personally known to me who found real peace and contentment through solitude, but I shall limit myself to one.

It concerns a widower who lived in a cottage but a few miles away from my own home at the time. He was in the early fifties, and was running the book-section in the only department-store of the nearby town. An elderly woman looked after his cottage and food, and he tended his garden unaided. Naturally he could do this only in the evenings, on Saturday afternoons and on Sundays. Except for his job in town, he never went out, and spent all his time by himself. When a neighbour once asked him whether he ever got bored with his own company, he answered, 'Bored? With the thousands of things to think about? I wish I had ten times as much time for that.'

Before I first met him, I suspected that he was a crank, or his attitude a pose. When I came to know him, I realized that there was not a touch of crankiness about him, and that he was absolutely genuine. He was not even a recluse. Though he did not seek the company of his neighbours, he never refused them hospitality or whatever assistance they might seek from him. He must have been efficient and good at his job, for otherwise he could not have worked his way up from the very

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bottom, and saved up enough to buy himself his little cottage and garden. Not only was he not turning away from life and the world, but was finding both of supreme interest, and was always endeavouring to get behind the meaning of things and the reasons why events happened in a certain way. As a young man he had taught himself never to give in to daydreaming, not even when engaged upon some dull routine job, such as that of licking hundreds of envelopes (a job on which he seemed to have spent a good many of his early days), or pasting labels into library copies of books. Instead, he tried to think deliberately and constructively, persisted in that habit all through life, and, finally, came to regard thinking as the most fascinating occupation open to man.

What was he thinking about, you may ask. About the plants in his garden, and Nature in general. About his work in town and how to improve it; about the people whom he met there. About politics and the events of the day. (While not a book-worm, he read a great deal, chiefly history and biography, but also books on philosophy and science. Somewhat surprisingly, he read very little about gardening. But then he believed that if a gardener could not learn all there was to know from studying the way soil and plants reacted to his interference with them, he never would learn anything worth knowing about gardening.)

He also thought a great deal about himself, and the likely reasons for his own actions and reactions. It was not introspection that drove him to such thoughts, but an insatiable curiosity about the mysterious ways in which life manifests itself, full of apparent contradictions and yet in the end logical and in accordance with her own complex laws. In the course of years he had built up for himself a philosophy that was no worse than most philosophies, and better than some. It provided him with a stable platform from which to meet the different problems of life, and gave him a sense of security that withstood the test of those recurrent difficulties from which no human life is free.

He did not speak a great deal, but what he said invariably had sense and the ring of authority. Whether you disagreed

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with some of his views or not, you had to admit that he had good reasons for them; it was not easy to oppose them by better ones. I noticed that he never let himself be drawn into an argument, as though he had a deep mistrust of that form of conversation. Yet he was not dogmatic, and listened attentively to what you had to say. I always felt that after my departure he would ponder over what I had said during my visit.

Was he happy in his solitude? I have never been sufficiently intimate with him to know the answer. But I have no doubt that he was at least the next best thing: contented and never bored. For he had found in his own mind all the entertainments that most people have to go out of their way to find, and for which they pay an inordinate price in effort, complications and money.

### III

## THOUGHT AND DAYDREAM

Not having been taught in youth how to think, many of us mistake daydreaming for thought. Yet have the two much in common?

Thought brings us closer to reality and can reveal truth. Daydreaming takes us away from both. Thought teaches us to be logical; daydreams foster vagueness and confusion. As a result of thought we can reach certain conclusions, unravel puzzles that formerly had baffled us, and acquire wider knowledge and understanding. Daydreams take us nowhere, produce nothing. A thought-process carried through to a logical conclusion leaves us satisfied, even exhilarated, and gives us a sense of assurance (however temporary). Daydreams leave behind a sense of discontent with life and ourselves; for neither is as satisfying as the daydream, which always runs one step ahead of the attainable. If daydreams are of the wishful kind—which they usually are—they are apt to be either trivial or frivolous, not unlike the cheapest kind of gossip, fiction, or film, its most popular articulate expressions. If the daydream is not of the wishful kind, it is negative. In that form it serves to feed and prolong our sense of resentment, self-pity, or hostility towards others.

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From whichever aspect we study daydreams, we invariably find them at the opposite pole to thought, being wasteful and destructive when thought is profitable and constructive.

### IV

## THE TECHNIQUE OF THOUGHT

Is the gift for thought inborn, like that for painting or mathematics, and is it therefore beyond the reach of some? Only what makes the *quality* of thought is inborn; not the *capacity* for it. Not everyone is able to think the thoughts of Aristotle or Newton, but everyone with an average brain has the necessary equipment for thought. But the equipment by itself is not enough if it is neglected and left to rust. Like all good tools it needs perfecting and sharpening.

. . . . .

We cannot think correctly and truthfully unless we first learn to observe correctly. (Whether our observation is also a true one is not determined by observation but by thought.)

Why should we have to observe before we set out to think? Because otherwise we have nothing to think about. We cannot think correctly about an object of which we are only vaguely aware, or with which we have only a fleeting acquaintance. And it is no answer to allege that there are ideas, theories and limitless abstractions to which we can turn thought without first having to undergo the labour of observation; for even thought about abstraction cannot dispense with observation.

Socrates would not have been likely to arrive at his abstract conclusions as to what constitutes the good, or love, if he had not first observed how his friends and the crowds of Athens behaved and reacted to one another in varying circumstances; and Albert Einstein would hardly have evolved the Theory of Relativity if he had not first paid meticulous attention to planetary movements, and to the most widely differing physical phenomena. We can certainly dismiss the idea that thought about abstractions need not be based upon observation. Moreover, such thought is more difficult for the untrained mind than

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thought about more concrete things. It either instantly leads to intellectual tangles out of which such a mind can find no escape, or runs away with us. And once that happens, we soon land in daydreams.

Well, what about thinking of people whom we know well? Surely, anyone can do that, without first having to pass an observation-test! It is not likely that, without accurate data concerning those people, our thoughts will be either correct or truthful. And in order to obtain such data, we have to collect them through observation.

There is another point to be considered. People of whom we wish to think are usually linked to us by some sort of emotional ties; it is therefore easy for our emotions to intrude between us and the object of our thought, since our emotional response is more immediate than that of the mind. 'Emotional attitudes are primary, cherished logical inductions are secondary and derivative.'<sup>1</sup> Once emotions get the better of thought, we are again lost in daydreams. So we must conclude that if we wish to learn how to think, we should choose objects which, while of sufficient interest to us to hold our attention, do not strongly engage our emotions. Of course any object that interests us is bound to engage our emotions in some measure. Our problem therefore is to keep a sound balance between them and our purely intellectual activity, by constantly checking and re-checking the influence of the former upon the latter. As a rule men are better at this dispassionate 'sifting' than women, for women have an inborn tendency to let their emotions and their instinct take a preponderant part in their intellectual processes.

. . . . .

Everything is a fit subject for thought and thus for observation: the streets through which we walk; the shapes and colours of the houses along them; the children and dogs who play in them; the man who delivers our milk, and the one who sells us a ticket on the bus; the circles made by the water when we throw a stone into it; the formation of clouds in the sky.

<sup>1</sup> *Religion in Primitive Society*, by Wilson D. Wallis, p. 316, 1939.

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One step further, and we begin to observe our reactions caused by pleasure, fatigue, fear, indigestion, or an aching tooth. And then we learn to observe how other people react to ourselves, and how we react to them.

Quite apart from the pleasure and the sense of being more alive that the exercise of observation awakens, it helps to train the mind. For we cannot observe successfully, that is, in such a way as to absorb and retain the results of our observation, unless we create in our mind a replica of the observed object: in other words, unless we watch it not only with our eyes but with our mind as well. This implies thinking of it: it is so many feet high, of such and such a colour, moves at a particular speed, reminds us of this or that. Evidently, observation is more than a preliminary stage of thought: it *is* thought.

. . . . .

The aim of thought is not merely to think truthfully about concrete objects of our observation, but—in so far as human relations are concerned—about people and their likely motives and reactions; and, developing further, about more abstract values, such as are the essence of ideas.

It is obvious that thought cultivated in solitude provides us with the means for counterbalancing the distressing impact of the life that we moderns are compelled to lead, and which constantly distorts our sense of values.

Periodical withdrawals into solitude, which means into ourselves, serve another aim as well. We find in them peace and, through peace, fortitude.

Few of us find opportunities for periods of solitude long enough—say, several days at a time—to recharge fully our spiritual and mental batteries. But even a few minutes of solitude deliberately achieved each day can be of great assistance.

## RELEASE THROUGH SOLITUDE AND THOUGHT

### V

#### FREEDOM FROM THOUGHT, AND MEDITATION

It may be asked why, if solitude, irrespective of thought, is of benefit, so much stress should have been laid on the importance of thought. Why? Because only those who know how to think also know how *not* to think. A mind constantly employed cannot find the occasional periods of rest it needs. If we do not know how to stop thinking, the mind begins to run amok among uncontrollable daydreams.

Though thought brings with it its own sense of peace, the soul finds its most perfect rest in that state of thoughtlessness which yet is not a vacuum. It is a state that defies clear definition. We might, perhaps, compare it with a state of wishless expectancy and spiritual (as opposed to purely physical or mental) wellbeing.

A state of mere inner emptiness implies unawareness. We achieve it only in dreamless sleep, or in a coma. The state of healing thoughtlessness is by no means one of unconsciousness. Though our mind is at rest and free from thought, we are yet conscious of ourselves and of our state of wellbeing. It is, in short, a state of consciousness on a plane beyond that of mind. Our awareness is not an intellectual one, but spiritual.

It is this state in which genuine meditation is born.

What is meditation? It is not identical with thinking, of however profound an order. It is a more-than-mental, namely, spiritual, identification with the object of our meditation. This means that our entire being is involved in it, and not merely emotions or mind separately or, even, together. They function: not in their ordinary condition, however, but in a more 'rarefied' one, raised to a purely spiritual level.

In an earlier chapter (on Love) it has been said that identification with someone or something outside of ourselves represents one aspect of love. In the preceding paragraph it has been stated that meditation, too, is identification. Does it then follow that love and meditation are identical? No. But it



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does mean that we cannot meditate successfully unless we are permeated by a sense of love. Loving thought is not necessarily meditation. But there can be no meditation without thought spiritualized by love.

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Even without aiming at meditation, we can gain through solitude the kind of refreshment that enables us to approach our fellow-men with a right sense of perspective. Relationships that had become either meaningless or irritating can assume new values and become a source of inspiration because we have in solitude and through thought achieved clarification and toleration.

## APPENDIX

### MAXIMS

There exist of course many other problems and means of personal adjustment that have not been included in the preceding section of this book. Though not necessarily less important than those discussed already, some of them are self-evident, and do not call for an exhaustive analysis. A few of them are therefore presented in the form of detached maxims.

#### I

#### REMEMBER TO REMEMBER

How smoothly human relations would proceed if only we remembered to remember! To remember what? That Aunt Agatha takes her tea very weak; that our predilection for sarcasm is apt to ruin conversation; that our loss of temper over the mislaid newspaper makes us appear in everyone's eyes a trying bear; that we invariably have to pay for this little self-indulgence, that ill-judged action. Then there are our many good intentions, the lessons we have learned in the past, the principles by which we claim to live, the hundred little things we know we ought to do, or not to do. Had we remembered them in time, we might have saved ourselves, and others, many unpleasant consequences. Unfortunately, we did not remember!

After a certain age it is often not ignorance but forgetfulness that prevents us from being more successful in our intercourse with others. We know perfectly well that we should be patient, silent on this occasion, expansive on another, more positive when we speak to Harry, self-effacing when we meet Mrs. Brown. Yet when we are put to the test, we fail again and again, not because of some inner devil, but simply because we have forgotten.

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And why have we forgotten? Possibly, because we suffer from a bad memory—in which case we ought to undergo some special training. But more likely it is not our memory that is at fault, but only our tendency to act automatically, and take everything, especially our own behaviour, for granted. Well, human relations call for constant readjustment, and thus for a fair measure of awareness. We shall achieve neither unless we remember that there are a hundred and one little things that do not happen by themselves, and that it is we who have to do them.

### II

#### DON'T TRY TO GET MORE OUT OF ANYONE THAN HE IS WILLING TO GIVE

By cajoling or threatening, by bribery or force, we might get more out of a person's loyalty, emotions, or effort, than he would be willing to give us unforced. For a time our strategy may succeed. But fruit not given willingly soon turns sour. In time our method will lose some of its effectiveness, and will leave behind resentment, or a sense of shame, in the other person. Either of these will easily develop into antagonism. His original loyalty will be replaced by annoyance of having been taken advantage of.

In the long run it proves cheaper to pay a genuine penny too much than a false one, or one too little, for whatever we wish to obtain from other people.

### III

#### NEVER TRY TO GET YOUR OWN BACK

To do so means aiming for vengeance. Both in its motive and its fulfilment, the desire for vengeance expresses a negative emotion for which no amount of sophistry can procure the sanction of reason. Even if our vengeance does not turn against us, it will leave in us an uneasy conscience or a feeling of shame. Nothing can redeem either, except making amends to the injured person. This practically means taking our revenge back. Thus we have to make two separate efforts, when none was

## APPENDIX: MAXIMS

necessary. For we might have spared ourselves both had we in the first place refrained from 'getting our own back'.

### IV

#### MAKE CONCESSIONS IN THE SMALL THINGS IF THEREBY THE GREATER ONES ARE SAVED

This truth should be self-evident. Yet over and over again we forget it, and jeopardize a valuable relationship for the sake of a small immediate gain, whether this be an opinion, a point in argument, or something material. We may secure our little gain, but we risk alienating the other person. At best we have gained our victory at the price of leaving behind resentment in him. He may soon forget one such instance. If, however, it is but one in a chain of successive minor gains and corresponding resentments, it will turn one day into the proverbial last straw that breaks the camel's back. Our score of little gains will have to be paid for by a major crisis, or even by a human loss that is much more painful than was the pleasure of all our past gains put together.

### V

#### DEFEAT IS BETTER THAN A BAD VICTORY

The fruits of a victory that leaves in the vanquished a sense of humiliation or injustice are not likely to be sweet to the victor. Sooner or later the loser will raise the issue (that had led to his defeat) in a different form, and will add to his original demands those that were inspired by his sense of grievance.

Some people mistake a bad victory for a half-victory. Yet the two are not identical. Half-victories are the common stuff of life, and are the outcome of compromise. Bad victories are not based on compromise—the willing concessions of both opponents. If they were, they would not be bad. And they are bad because, however complete, they have been won at the price of the loser's injured pride and his consciousness of defeat.

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In private human relations the only victories worth winning are those that our opponent grants us from his very heart, even though not necessarily with a good grace. He will concede us our victory only if he can see the justice of our case and the restraint of our demands. If we press our victory behind either, he will feel humiliated and turn into our enemy.

### VI

#### ALWAYS SHOW YOUR GRATITUDE, NEVER EXPECT IT FROM OTHERS

After having gone out of our way to help another person, and conscious of our 'good deed', we naturally feel entitled to an expression of gratitude in return. But in all probability our service will remain unacknowledged. If, however, the good deed was unpremeditated, and we were hardly conscious of performing it, we are most likely to be rewarded by an expression of gratitude. Why this apparent paradox? Because both giving and thanking should be spontaneous. If we give consciously, expecting thanks, our action is but little distinguishable from service rendered for payment.

Whether a 'good deed' is acknowledged or not, it is foolish to expect thanks, and twice foolish to feel upset by their absence. However gladly given, a favour places its recipient in the position of a debtor; and few of us cherish acknowledging a debt. Even those eager to show their gratitude may possibly suffer from shyness. This by no means implies lacking a sense of appreciation on their part. Often people who feel strongest are least skilful at giving expression to their sentiments.

Another point to remember: what we regard as our magnanimity may be judged by those who benefit from it as our acknowledgement of their right, or as the repayment of some debt of which we ourselves have hardly been conscious. To admit wholeheartedly that a favour received was unmerited denotes a certain nobility of soul. Are we entitled to expect it in everyone to whom we have rendered a service? We have a duty to be stern with our own shortcomings, but no right to resent those of others.

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When the parts are reversed, and we are not the distributors but the recipients of favours, we should obviously not withhold signs of our gratitude from those entitled to it. In the long run it always pays not to make for ourselves excuses that we willingly make for others. Thus, though we may be shy or undemonstrative by nature, we should try to overcome that handicap and not make of it an excuse for our silence. If we remain silent, the person from whom we received a favour may easily feel discouraged. By showing him unmistakably our gratitude, we not only give him pleasure, but also strengthen his faith in human nature, and his self-esteem.

### VII

#### DISREGARD THE ILL MOODS OF OTHERS

Few things are more upsetting to our peace of mind than the sudden ill moods of those with whom we are in daily contact. If such moods are caused by some concealed resentment towards ourselves, and we find it impossible to discuss their cause frankly, there is no other way to counteract them except by ignoring them. Our indifference robs the other person of the ammunition with which to feed his grudge against us. No one likes nursing an ill-mood indefinitely: it becomes boring. By ignoring it, we sooner or later make him get tired of it, and rob him of the opportunity for an 'emotional explosion', that would have made of both of us its victims.

### VIII

#### DON'T SHOW YOUR RESENTMENT TO THE PERSON AGAINST WHOM YOU HAVE A GRUDGE

In every relationship there may arise justified occasions for resenting another person's injustice, unfairness, or disloyalty towards ourselves. Sometimes we also resent legitimate slurs that we alone consider unmerited.

Whether our resentment be justified or not, it takes us nowhere if we make a display of it. Some of us do that openly,

## PROBLEMS OF PERSONAL ADJUSTMENT

others by mere innuendoes, others still by morose spells of silence that speak more loudly of our grievance than the most eloquent words could do. Whichever method we adopt, it is bound to create an atmosphere of strain that is extremely irritating to everyone concerned. The longer we carry our resentment with us, the more difficult a reconciliation becomes.

If we have been treated unfairly, the right remedy is to talk it out with the offender. Should this for some reason be impossible, the only other thing to do is to act as though nothing had happened. This may not be easy to achieve. But nothing is easy once there is a discord; and since the stakes in a worthwhile relationship are always high, no effort is too great if it brings about an easing of the tension.

We could, of course, choose the easier way of slamming the door and punishing the offender by spending the evening at the pictures or the pub. This may provide us with a momentary emotional release; but upon returning home, we shall still find the discord awaiting us—probably in an aggravated form—and realize that our absence has not made one particular heart grow any fonder.

## IX

### DO NOT FORCE YOUR PRINCIPLES UPON OTHERS

We all believe that our own views and principles are right, and wish to see them adopted by others, particularly those closest to us. In trying to put that wish into effect, we forget that those whom we intend to influence have principles of their own. They are not likely to give them up as a result of our efforts to force ours upon them. If our principles are really right, i.e. based on truth, they are bound to be creative. But they can prove that—and thus convince other people by example—only in action, never through argument.

Even assuming that we have succeeded, we have little right to expect those who have 'accepted' our principles also to live in accordance with them. For can we claim that we ourselves live by them? Thomas à Kempis wrote: 'Be not angry that

## APPENDIX: MAXIMS

you cannot make others as you wish them to be, since you cannot make yourself as you wish to be' (*De Imit. Christi*. Lib. I, cap. XVI).

### X

#### DO NOT EXPECT SUCCESS IN HUMAN RELATIONS WITHOUT EFFORT

None of the worth-while things in life can be achieved without effort: least of all a satisfactory relationship with another person. The exceptions to this rule are exceedingly rare—if they exist at all. It may be asked why a union between people held together by common interests, similar dispositions, and sympathy, should not run smoothly of its own accord, and without demanding a special effort. Well, if such a union is to be satisfactory, it must grow and develop. If it does neither, it soon stagnates, and finally disintegrates. The laws governing all life have decreed that no satisfactory growth and achievement are possible without effort, even struggle. The higher our aim and the prize we wish to secure the greater and more persistent the requisite effort. The effortless processes of growth in the jungle do not improve the quality of its vegetation; they merely multiply it. In an advanced type of existence such as ours, a wheat field or an apple orchard is superior to a jungle, however fertile. To establish either and keep it productive, a great deal of conscious effort has to be expended. A human relationship is even more exacting and more complex than an orchard.

### XI

#### NEVER BE SURPRISED AT ANYTHING ANOTHER PERSON MAY DO

Most of us are afraid of the new and unforeseen. It upsets our usual concepts and our steady rhythm of life. We find the new and uncommon particularly upsetting if it is sprung upon us by a person we know intimately and trust. How shocking of such a person, we say, suddenly to start an argument with a policeman, to make friends with those vulgar Browns, to marry a harlot. Our pride is injured, for we thought we knew



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exactly what to expect of our friend. Now we feel that we have been let down by him. Had he only told us what he was going to do, it wouldn't be half so bad.

Well, our friend never even uttered a word because in all probability he had not himself foreseen his 'shocking' action. Nothing is more unpredictable than human nature. Neither our friend, nor the vulgar Browns, nor, sad to admit, ourselves, could ever foretell what either of us might do next. A thousand different, and all equally unforeseeable, situations await us each day; we carry within us a jungle of emotions from which at any moment a tiger, a snake, or, possibly, a butterfly, whose existence we had never even suspected, may emerge.

Rather than feel shocked or put out by it it is wiser to accept the new as an inevitable manifestation of life over which we have as little control as we have over a sudden thunderstorm. To be angry with the weather and sulk won't help us. All we can do is either to make for shelter, or pull up our collar and step vigorously into the rain.

PART VI

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT



## CHAPTER I

# THE MAGIC OF TRUTH

Since the very dawn of his history man has puzzled over the question: What is truth? Often he found and formulated answers to it, and quite as often those answers did not agree one with another. Is this surprising? When Pilate asked, 'What is truth?' he certainly envisaged something very different from the truth for which the prisoner of whom he asked the question was ready to die. And even then he 'would not stay for an answer', as he knew their name was legion. Even dictionaries, those master-keys to the meaning of words, cannot dispel the ambiguity that surrounds this word. According to them truth is: conformity to facts, or accurate representation of facts, or ascertained fact. Such definitions tell us as much as we are entitled to expect from dictionaries. But do they go far enough? Do they not, inevitably, leave out the most important but least definable aspect of truth, namely that it is creative?

Surely, truth is more than merely the representation or equivalent—which the dictionary term 'conformity' implies—of a fact? Whether we deal with a material, intellectual or any other fact, in itself it is not truth. It only becomes truth because of the spiritual reality (the Platonic *Eidos*) inherent in all phenomena. Thus by its very nature truth is spiritual (which facts need not be). And being spiritual it is creative. The mere fact of 'a boot' is not creative. But the truth of its 'bootiness', namely that 'a boot is a boot' has spiritual significance, and is creative. From the fact called 'a boot', we derive nothing beyond the fact itself. From the truth 'a boot is a boot' we derive many implications, i.e. it is a boot and not a table or anything else, it has its individuality, it exists, and so forth.

Facts do not acquire a meaning except through the truth that establishes them as such. It does this by transmitting its creative principle, as yet unmanifested, into concrete form: that

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is, by becoming the word. Not until the word, Logos, was, could God manifest Himself. Only when He became Logos, did the creation of the world begin. Likewise, a fact is not truth unless the word has given it spiritual significance.

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When we come to truth concerning human relations, we can narrow down our recognition of it to one of its aspects in particular, and can speak of it in less abstract terms. If, as is so often assumed, truth in this connection were simply the moral code governing our conduct, it would be something outside and independent of ourselves, and propounded by an arbiter, who, however impartial, is something of an abstraction.

Yet in all human intercourse—the sphere of our most personal and least objective activities—the only valid truth is the one established by ourselves. To be truthful with others simply means to be uncompromisingly honest with ourselves. Such honesty must cover both our motives and desires, and our actions emerging from them. It will demand that the path leading from motive to action be a straight one, and that we more consciously contemplate that ‘inmost centre in us all, where truth abides in fulness’.<sup>1</sup> ‘Straightness’ in this connection is not meant to denote a moral quality; rather does it mean acting in accordance with our real motives (irrespective of their moral worth), and not in a manner calculated either to hide these or to make them appear different from what they really are. In this sense, the crooked way of a crook is for him the ‘straight’ way.

Even those of us who are not crooks often try to ‘improve’ a given situation by doctoring truth, that is to say, by evading this straight way. Such attempts naturally lead to subterfuge of some kind or another. Even the inflection of a word, a gesture, or a sigh, can be a subterfuge that distorts truth. We pretend (not so much to others as to ourselves) that our motives are less selfish than they really are; or we put fictitious interpretations on our true desires, self-righteously slapping on the moral whitewash. We should no doubt depart less readily from

<sup>1</sup> *Paracelsus* (R. Browning).

## THE MAGIC OF TRUTH

truth if we remembered that truth has far greater power than the cleverest tricks to achieve our ends.

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I can give no better exemplification of the creative faculty of truth than this detailed case from actual life, remarkable for the exceptional clarity with which it illustrates that faculty. As a rule, life works in too complex and oblique a manner for its creative principles to be so clearly disclosed.

Mr. A. wrote to me, shortly after the Second World War, and I followed his case fairly closely for the best part of the following two years.

Though before his marriage Mr. A. led sexually a fairly wild life, once he was married, he entirely changed his habits, and till the outbreak of the war was a perfectly happy and faithful husband. Then came five years of war service abroad. During that time he had indulged in a few erotic adventures—he was of a very highly-sexed nature—none of which was serious. All the while he was looking forward to the reunion with his wife. At last the longed-for day arrived, and he returned home and was demobilized.

During the first few weeks his wife appeared the same as she had always been, but once the exultation due to his homecoming was over, he noticed a certain artificiality in her attitude towards him, as though in his absence she had undergone some change. She seemed to have to force herself to satisfy his conjugal claims. Did she suspect that he had been unfaithful to her? Since she held strong views on the subject of marital fidelity, Mr. A. did not feel it would serve any useful purpose to speak of something that belonged to the irrevocable past and that, anyhow, had had next to no meaning to him. His own loving attitude betrayed nothing of his secret. But her new frigidity, coupled with his erotic vitality, and with the restlessness that his return into civilian life had brought about, soon landed him in the promiscuous habits of his bachelor days. For the first time in his married life he sought refuge in lies to cover up his occasional absences from home.

With each month relations with his wife became more

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strained. Mr. A. knew that his wife had not had a lover during his absence, nor had one now; but since in the past she had never seemed sexually frigid, he assumed that the appearance of that condition was due to her having taken a dislike to him. Perhaps if he made no sexual demands upon her things would improve, he thought; and so for some time he relied exclusively on extra-marital liaisons. Even so, and although he was most careful to avoid arousing her suspicions, his wife's attitude worsened progressively.

Eventually Mr. A. sought advice. He was told to exercise for a time complete abstinence. Since his promiscuity caused him an uneasy conscience, he might at least try to find peace with himself; and this advice he followed. His wife knew nothing of this circumstance, nothing of his changed habits, yet strangely enough her attitude towards him began to improve; in fact for several weeks a semblance of harmony existed between them. But then his sexual urge once again got the better of him, and he resumed one of his former liaisons. Though again his wife knew nothing about it, her apparent dislike of him returned.

Mr. A. was an intelligent man with a keen sense of observation. The coincidence of his abstinence and the improved relations with his wife, and of the reverse situation as well, struck him as significant. Was there a direct link between the two? After a certain time, he concluded that there must be, so he decided to act upon this conclusion. By a great effort of will he stopped all his infidelities, and hardly a fortnight passed before he noticed a change for the better in his wife's attitude. He persisted in his continence, and with every week she became more and more approachable. At the end of some three months it was she who first suggested a resumption of their intimate relations. Gradually their former harmony was restored, and Mrs. A. showed herself as responsive as she had been in the early days of their marriage.

What was it that had caused her original frigidity and then the reconciliation? Had Mrs. A. subconsciously and instinctively reacted to her husband's infidelity? Mr. A. suspected that it was so. His suspicion grew into certainty when he made yet another

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discovery. Though he no longer was unfaithful to his wife, there were occasions when he involuntarily found himself playing with the idea of promiscuous pleasures. Every time this happened, something would shortly occur to provoke friction between him and his wife: they would embark upon a futile argument; one of them would inadvertently keep the other waiting on some occasion, or they would find themselves disagreeing on a subject on which they usually saw eye to eye. Mr. A. no longer had the slightest doubt that his wife not only sensed, and reacted to, his infidelity, but even to his promiscuous thoughts. As he put it to me: he might be able to cheat his wife, but he could not cheat truth. It was not so much his infidelity that had been upsetting his matrimonial harmony as the untruthfulness implied by it, the falsity of the relationship brought about by this cheating of the truth.

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Mr. A.'s experience only confirms what must be known to every student of the subject, namely, that truth, if cheated, takes its own revenge. Not often is its response as unmistakable as it was in Mr. A.'s case. And it is never quite as striking in a union less intimate and less precisely defined than the one existing between husband and wife. But however limiting the circumstances of a particular case may be, the creative power of truth is not invalidated by them. As Albert Schweitzer put it, 'the spirit generated by truth is stronger than the force of circumstances' (*My Life and Thought*).

Truth in action can assume an almost magical force. Because of its powers, we easily come to regard it as some independent authority outside ourselves; but its power derives from the co-ordination of various elements each of which develops organically from within ourselves, and each of which branches from the central determination to conduct our relationships with the uncompromising honesty referred to at the beginning of this chapter.

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Though the gospel of truthfulness is universally accepted by religion, philosophy, science and ethics, in practice it finds itself



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more and more replaced by the gospel of success. This is one of the worst enemies of truthfulness in human relations. What does it matter, its devotees seem to be saying, whether I am truthful or not, so long as I am successful? Hitler held that any lie was permissible so long as it led to success, and that notion has been tacitly accepted by people who would be horrified to find themselves bracketed with the Fuehrer! Naturally, *material* success is here implied. It is probably not accidental that the gospel of success at any price has been followed more avidly in Germany than in any other great country. Long before Hitler, success—whether in commerce, science, politics or armaments—was one of the deities on whose altar the Germans were ready to sacrifice most of their other gods.

As with so many tendencies, the thirst for success assumed in Germany extreme forms; but it has long ceased to be a German monopoly. Today almost everywhere material success is considered preferable to adherence to truth, and this is not the least reason for the low respect in which purely human values are held. But then such success does not necessarily depend upon truthfulness. Satisfactory human relations are thus dependent.

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Are there not situations, it may be asked, in which truthfulness is not only of no advantage, but is even a definite handicap? What about the lies and subterfuge which helped the resistance movements in German-occupied countries during the Second World War to defend the cause of human decency and freedom? May we not sometimes shield another person and save his very life by not telling the literal truth?

Here once again we must remind ourselves of truth as a creative power, and backed by the will to pursue undeviatingly the course that accords with our real motives. Moreover, so far in this chapter we have been dealing with universal principles applicable to normal conditions of life. Pathological situations, such as are brought about by, say, a World War, obviously demand their own pathological methods. Wars or other violent eruptions invariably create their own moral codes. So do certain exceptional situations in the lives of individuals.

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Expediency has to come into play. For instance, we naturally do not tell a person whom the doctors have pronounced as incurable that there is no hope for his survival.

But everyday human intercourse is not ruled by principles applicable to certain exceptional circumstances only. Even in such intercourse, however, situations occur in which it is wiser not to tell the whole truth. This need not detract from our honesty of purpose. But each particular case makes its own demands, and has to be judged on its own merits. Our individual sense of discrimination will tell us whether truth should be suppressed or not. But *suppression* of truth need not be *distortion* of truth. There is a great difference between silence and a lie.

Whatever we may be telling others, the thing that matters is to be truthful with ourselves, and not to base our conduct on self-deception or pretence. For when we do that, we prevent the creative principle of truth from manifesting itself in a positive sense.

Whenever reason compromises with selfish emotions, we are apt to 'doctor' truth. In that process we are hardly aware of what we are doing; since the objective voice of reason is subdued, if not completely silenced, there is only one arbiter left to reveal to us the true character of our 'doctoring', namely conscience. But when we refer to conscience, we have to distinguish between its superficial layer, superimposed as though from outside, and its genuine core. The former reflects merely the habits and conventions by which we abide, the latter alone speaks with the voice of truth, which we might equally well call the voice of the heart. For in matters of conduct the heart knows better than the mind what truth is. When Albert Schweitzer was asked to send a message to some young people, he said: 'Tell them that the truths they feel deep down in their hearts are the real truths. We must listen to that voice . . . that comes to us across the noise of the world's doings' (Quoted by George Seaver, in *Albert Schweitzer, The Man and his Mind*, A. & C. Black, 1947).

If we agree with Schweitzer, we realize that to act truthfully in our relations with our fellow-beings is to act morally. The

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commands revealed by the heart (or conscience) seldom differ from those imposed by morality, but need not *necessarily* be identical with those of the conventional morality of our day, nor the morality advocated by this or that church. Nevertheless they may prove to have a deeper and more universal significance than either, and in so far as our own conduct is concerned, it is these dictates of the heart, faithfully followed, and not the canons of conventional morality perhaps inexpertly applied, that will have a positive influence.

## CHAPTER II

### DETACHMENT

All strong sentiments imply attachment. Whether we love or hate, in either case we are attached to the object of our feelings, and the stronger these are, the stronger is our attachment. While attachment can be inseparable from even the loftiest sentiments, such as love, friendship, admiration, or compassion, it can yet go beyond what are its legitimate limits, and when that happens, attachment becomes stronger than the original emotion that was its cause, and denotes not so much sentiments toward another person as preoccupation with ourselves. Jealousy is the most obvious example of such egotistic attachment.

All undue attachment is a sign and a source of weakness. Apart from enslaving us to the object of our attachment—whether this be a person or some material possession—it destroys our objectivity and sense of perspective, and robs us of our inner freedom. Even attachment to God is wrong when it causes indifference to others and exclusive devotion to this one absorbing preoccupation.

It is hardly surprising that the happiest relations exist only between people who know the secret of detachment. Their detachment, of course, will not denote indifference—something incompatible with the strong emotions that nourish a happy relationship. To attach ourselves, whether to people, things, or ideas, comes quite naturally to all of us. But only a few know how to develop an attitude of detachment. Some can achieve this without any particular effort, but if their detachment is merely due to an inability to feel strongly, it is negative and can hardly be of value. On the other hand, it may denote wisdom, a sound sense of proportion, balance and self-control.

Without an inborn aptitude, detachment is extremely difficult of attainment. It is in fact so difficult that a great deal in Hindu and Buddhist doctrines, and in the writings of men as

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different as Plato and St. John of the Cross—to mention but two spiritual leaders of the West—is concerned solely with it. The detachment from the world and its prizes, as preached by some of the Eastern doctrines, can hardly be considered an ideal for Western people. For it implies indifference not only to the vanities of the world and our own passions but also to our fellow-beings. Since their suffering may be due entirely to their unfavourable karma,<sup>1</sup> and, as such, is willed by higher powers, we have no duty to alleviate it, they contend. This is a doctrine quite unacceptable to the moral sense of the Occident. And in the Orient such men as Gandhi have been fighting the doctrine because of its potentialities for exploitation by unscrupulous people, rightly considering that in certain circumstances unquestioning submissiveness is a deplorable state of affairs.

The right sort of detachment must not be negative—its Eastern form so often is—but have a positive, even active force behind it. This may sound like a contradiction in terms, detachment seeming to imply inaction. But the right kind of detachment presupposes attachment minus self-centredness and egotism. It does not mean ceasing to project our thoughts and feelings on to the object of our attachment, but doing this, as it were, in a different key. Instead of concerning ourselves with the effects of such projection upon ourselves, we consider them only from the aspect of the receiving object.

As a rule, when we are strongly attached to another person, we are never quite free from an undercurrent of anxiety either over his wellbeing or over the progress of our relationship with him. Obviously only a certain measure of detachment can free us from that anxiety. But how are we to bring this about if detachment is not part of our make-up? Earlier in this book we dealt with the subject of jealousy, and found that when strong emotions are involved, willpower and reason cannot accomplish much. We have concluded, however, that faith can help, as it can always help whenever our own resources prove insufficient. Without it, detachment is infinitely more difficult. There is Stoicism, of course, but Stoicism demands certain virtues that our civilization does not particularly cultivate or encourage.

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 359-360.

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Moreover, Stoicism produces indifference rather than detachment. Even where it leads to success it seldom also leads to the happiness that comes from inner liberation. The stoic is the man with stiff upper lip and expressionless eyes, and not the one whose inner victory radiates through his entire being.

If we have faith, we believe that God cares sufficiently about our good to help us when we are in real need. In so far as the faith of the believer is concerned, it does not even matter whether God is a proved 'reality' or merely the projection of our own wishes. It is quite enough to have a profound faith in Him. For, as has already been mentioned in earlier chapters, such faith places at our disposal resources unattainable through any other means, and helps us to treat a given difficulty with greater detachment. Because of our faith, we can transfer part of the responsibility for the hoped-for success of our struggle to a higher authority in whose greater wisdom and resources we believe implicitly.

I am not suggesting that there is an everyday need for this type of spiritual exercise, to which we resort only when situations are getting out of hand because of our determination to coerce another person and to become sole architects of destiny. It is at these moments of danger that we seek refuge in faith and submit ourselves to the discipline demanded by it.

When we are strongly attached to another person, we are apt to put more effort into the relationship than it really requires, and try to force events to our will. This creates a more or less constant mental and emotional tension within us. No organism in such a state can give of its best, and no human being can bear to be the cause and focus of such tenseness. It is an insupportable tyranny, whatever the motive behind it. Even the most accomplished surgeon cannot operate on a body unless it is relaxed; likewise God cannot come to our assistance and work through us if our being is in a state that leaves no room for anything but its own tension. The great mystics of all religions insist that God cannot do His work in the human soul unless it has 'emptied' itself. When the Eastern sage hopes to hear the divine voice in his meditations, he first creates a state of complete inner vacuity. He does this by

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eliminating everything that would stand between the voice of God and himself: his thoughts, feelings and desires.

He who takes to himself a joy  
Doth the wingèd power destroy,  
But he who takes a joy as it flies  
Lives in eternity's sunrise.

St. John of the Cross teaches that the requisite condition cannot be arrived at except 'by the most perfect purgation and detachment', and by what he calls 'being spiritually hidden from all created things' (*The Dark Night of the Soul*, Book Two), by which he means not material things but our own impulses, reactions and attachments. On another occasion he says that the soul 'must be as it were passive, making no efforts of its own . . . perfectly detached, attached to nothing . . . for every act of the soul, even of thought, of liking or disliking will break that profound silence necessary for hearing the voice of God' (*The Mystical Doctrine of St. John of the Cross*, pp. 154-5, Sheed & Ward, 1935).

We might compare the requisite state with that preceding falling asleep. So long as we are filled with the different 'acts of the soul, even of thought, of liking or disliking', those acts stand between us and sleep which refuses to come. Once, however, those acts have ceased, and we are empty of them, sleep enters into us. The difference between the states of sleep and detachment is, of course, that whereas in the one case the subsequent process is an unconscious one, in the other we do not lose consciousness. We merely develop a different state of consciousness, less earthbound, more rarefied.

Though the average person may not be able to bring about the complete inner 'emptiness' cultivated by the mystics, his faith as such, and his desire for communion with God, can produce a state not dissimilar to it. That state naturally implies a certain measure of detachment. All true detachment<sup>1</sup> is essentially a spiritual quality. The spiritual detachment produced by communion with God is the pre-condition for detachment from such concrete things as persons or possessions.

<sup>1</sup> It has become fairly common among modern writers to use the word non-attachment rather than detachment. I find the latter preferable, as it implies a state that is both more definite and positive.

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The materialist may point out that many people attain detachment without recourse to faith, and that seldom has this occurred on such a wide scale as in our own times. Have not thousands of people, formerly deeply attached to their homes, possessions, privileged positions, safe incomes, seen these disappear overnight? Have not people in London and Rotterdam, Warsaw and Stalingrad, learned detachment, irrespective of whether they believed in God or not? And what about those millions who have lost their dearest ones during the war?

It is a complete fallacy to imagine that a loss imposed from outside necessarily produces detachment in the loser. Even if the loss does not create resentment, bitterness, and a grudge, it cannot by itself bring about more than resignation. Many millions of people have had to learn the lesson of resignation, and of accommodating themselves to conditions distasteful to them and not of their own making. But resignation is still not detachment. It is a negative quality, and does not imply that we have inwardly freed ourselves from our attachment to the lost possession. Indeed, though we may be resigned to the fact that we have lost it—there is nothing else for us to do—we may be hankering all the while for its recapture. Detachment means that we no longer suffer inwardly as a result of our loss, and cherish no hope of regaining what has vanished.

Of course, loss imposed from outside, such as war devastation, including destruction of property by bombing, war bereavements, and abandonment of goods by fleeing populations, might sometimes bring in its train detachment as well as resignation. But whereas resignation comes of its own, detachment has to be gained through deliberate effort. And the effort has to be spiritual, for only in the spirit can we 'overcome the world'. Whether the cause for such overcomings is imposed upon us by circumstances, or, as in the case of saints and mystics, is sought deliberately, is of secondary importance. In either case true detachment will denote victory, after purposeful struggle. Material prizes may come to us automatically; spiritual ones never do. They have to be earned.

When we are very strongly attached to another person, even



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the slightest loosening of the bonds that hold the relationship together becomes unbearable to us. However small each individual instance of such loosening, we regard it as a loss and fight against it. Yet the causes of our loss may be quite beyond our control, however hard we fight. Even when we listen to the voice of reason and endeavour to achieve a certain measure of detachment, we do so only in respect to the partial loss that we recognize as inevitable. Yet how seldom can such piecemeal victories stop the final disintegration of a relationship that has been undermined by too strong an attachment on our part! Drastic surgery would be more effective than long-drawn-out application of palliatives, or a grudging yielding of small concessions.

What is meant by drastic surgery? It means making up our mind that we can do nothing to prevent our loss, and accepting the discipline of a sharp, clean break. Once our mind is absolutely clear on that point, the will can follow it, and make a voluntary sacrifice of the object of our attachment.

Although intelligence naturally will participate here, a sacrifice made merely at the bidding of reason brings about not true detachment, but only resignation. For, as has already been stated, such detachment can only be attained at the price of spiritual struggle that goes deeper than intellectual resolve.

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The workings of faith are most mysterious. Often when we have gained detachment through faith we find in the end that we do not have to give up the object from whose bondage it has been so difficult to free ourselves. It is, as it were, given back to us. Not only do we not lose the affection of the person the links with whom had been loosening, but, as a result of our newly-won detachment, that affection grows stronger. Indeed, often we cannot gain the world except by first losing it. The very disappearance of our eagerness to enslave the other person may awaken his interest anew and reassure him that the predatory element in our attachment has died away.

### CHAPTER III

## FAITH OR RELIGION?

The observant reader may have noticed that whenever in these pages reference is made to the inspiration a man finds in his relationship to God, the word *faith* is used, and not 'religion'. This distinction, which but a few generations back might have denoted churlishness or pedantry, is deliberate. For when nowadays reference is made to religion, instantly visions of half-empty churches, theology, dogma, and, above all, denomination, are evoked.

But these are but appendages and accretions. The various aspects of organized religion, such as church-going, parochial activity, the study of theology and dogma, devoted adherence to this or that denomination, undoubtedly have a tremendous influence on human behaviour: but it must not be supposed that they represent the essence of faith, or that their pursuit implies possession of the blessing of faith.

Faith is something more personal and, at the same time, more comprehensive than religion, as generally interpreted today. Religion is but one of the channels through which faith becomes articulate. Fundamentally faith is man's consciousness of his direct relationship with God, and apart from religious observances, can express itself through the medium of art, love, or good works (both of action and contemplation). It can blossom through a word or a gesture, in fact through anything that has little to do with religion in the conventional sense of the word, religion which is a kind of framework of faith, and which presupposes the embracing of particular dogmas, legends and ceremonies with antagonism to certain heresies and tabus.

Does faith in the creative sense, and as applied to human relations, depend upon any of these extraneous circumstances? It may, but it need not. For not until religion is born in the

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individual heart and out of personal experience will it be sufficiently creative to guide our conduct one towards another. This, however, presupposes an intensely individual recognition of the spiritual truths inherent in belief in God. In all my experience I have not met a single man or woman whose conduct was illumined by the truths of religion without such a personal 'discovery' of their validity.

Does it mean that religion in its purely denominational sense—or what might be called Churchianity—has no contribution to make? In view of the enormous civilizing influence exercised by the churches throughout the ages, the very question may seem ingenuous and impertinent. Nevertheless it is not unjustified. For official religion as taught both in the West and in the East is *ipso facto* denominational. From this it follows that it places the accent on what is peculiar to it rather than on what is universal, and on the differences separating it from all the other creeds. Yet in no sphere are we less entitled to stress separating aspects than in one dedicated exclusively to the spirit. Religious principles with the most creative influence upon individual conduct are precisely the ones that are common to all the great creeds: those that reveal the power of truth, love, charity, and service; that stress the spiritual nature of man, deriving as it does from his God-conceived origin, and his personal link with his divine maker. Such principles by no means limit religion to mere humanitarianism, and do not leave out its mystical element. For the latter is the well whose waters feed all genuine communion with God, irrespective of whether this takes place at the high altar of St. Peter's in Rome, or in the poor home of the humblest man who has never been inside a church. And without such communion there can be no true religion.

Churchianity is quite as much—if not more—concerned with what we must without irreverence call the trappings of religion. For all their significance, these are but secondary. The 'personal conception of God, taught by the New Testament' and implying a 'personal encounter with God, a total self-surrender, was supplanted early in Christian history by the Catholic view of faith, which identified it with doctrinal

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belief and gradually transformed it into the recognition of the infallible authority of the Church and its doctrine . . . This gross distortion of the idea of faith . . . the greatest tragedy of Christian history, was practically repeated by Reformed theologians . . . and is largely responsible for the modern man's wholesale rejection of revelation and religious faith'.<sup>1</sup>

. . . . .

One of the chief tasks of the Christian religion obviously is to turn people into active followers of Christ (though not necessarily of the Church). The guidance and instrument for accomplishing this task are contained in the few fundamental principles laid down by the Founder of Christianity. Everything else with which Churchianity is preoccupied is of only subsidiary importance.

How can a child born into our scientific age, and educated according to (more or less) scientific postulates, be expected to deal with problems of immaculate conception, resurrection, the Trinity, the presence of the Body in the Eucharist, and so forth? These matters are difficult enough for the intelligent adult. The most erudite leaders of the Churches themselves have in two thousand years been unable to agree about them. In the child they can only cause bewilderment. Since his lessons in science inevitably undermine his beliefs in the truth of those dogmas, he easily comes to doubt the truth of other Christian principles as well. Would it not, therefore, be wiser to infuse in him merely the fundamental truths of Christ's gospel, without at the same time planting the seeds of doubt and duality? Those truths contain all the ethical, spiritual and mystical guidance necessary for a Christian life.

Churchianity knows that though the truths it propounds make for right conduct, no such conduct has been brought about in the world. The Church is the chief guardian and mouthpiece of those truths, yet it has not been able to save the present generation from two World Wars. Can the Church in all honesty wash its hands and say: 'It is not my fault if people

<sup>1</sup> *The Times Literary Supplement*, in a review of Emil Brunner's book *Revelation and Reason*, No. 2386.

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will not listen to me. I gave them plenty of warning'? And in how many wars in world history has the Church been actively involved?

A truth presented significantly and with uncompromising honesty will always assert itself. If Newton had maintained that the law of gravitation applied only to a particular apple but not to a pear or, in fact, any other kind of apple, his discovery would have had to wait for general acceptance until someone presented it in a less narrow form. Since the truths of Christianity are at least as unassailable and universal as is the law of gravitation, something evidently is wrong with the way in which Churchianity persists in presenting them.

Perhaps it is too much to expect an organization that for two thousand years has been undergoing a steady process of dogmatization to have the vitality requisite for a fundamental change in its methods. Yet will anything less than such a change enable Churchianity to infuse true religion into life?

What applies to the Christian Churches also applies to the non-Christian. To whatever creed we turn, we find pre-occupation with its history, and its theological and formalistic aspects, rather than with what is spiritual and universal in it. To draw attention to this weakness of the various denominations by no means implies advocating some new syncretic creed without its own organic roots. It does no more than point the suggestion that the different creeds, by concentrating more on the spiritual and less on the intellectual aspects of religion, could achieve their true aim without sacrificing their individuality. For it cannot be too often repeated that to the great mass of humanity it is the content, and not the framework, that really matters.

. . . . .

Whether churchmen or not, if we are not indifferent to the future of Western civilization, we must regard the progressive anaemia of the Churches as one of the major tragedies of our times. Until a less narrow and more perfect vessel has been found for the great religious gospels, the Churches can still play an important role in counterbalancing those powers of materialism that inevitably lead to totalitarianism and to

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the annihilation of the fundamental freedom and dignity of man. But since their stereotyped methods have failed, in spite of valiant pioneer and revivalist efforts by hundreds of inspired individuals aware of the Churches' inadequacy; and since their concentration on sectarianism, theology, and externals has prevented them from making religion a vital force in Western life, something less narrow, more spiritual, more realistic, is obviously indispensable.

It is, of course, a commonplace that church attendance in itself gives no guarantee of a religion-inspired life. People attend church for so many other motives than the ones they profess. It is also as commonplace that countless people who subscribe to the tenets of no particular Church, and hold themselves aloof from all denominations, lead deeply religious lives. And, thirdly, countless people practising religion along denominational lines are also profoundly and unswervingly religious. Yet there is really nothing surprising in all this. The innermost inspiration of the two last groups will be the same: the individual experience and recognition of the truths generated by faith. What gives the faith of a man—whether he be churchman or not—its decisive impulse is not theology, dogma, nor philosophy, but a personal revelation—usually following upon some blow received at the hands of life. The suffering that comes with such blows has always proved the safest key to revelation. Even to the most sensitive Christian soul (unless it be that of a born mystic) the wounds and tears of Jesus are less painful than his own suffering over the death of his beloved wife or child. The Church can provide neither such an experience nor the spiritual release from it. For this, too, has to be born out of an individual recognition of God's willingness to succour. The words with which the Church may comfort a bereaved person are as a tinkling cymbal unless he has first made an individual discovery of God. Once this has happened, then the Church can assist him to substantiate his own discovery. But not until then. For words, exhortation, ceremonial, observances, are all but empty unless the spirit and soul are actively participating—revelation can never be imposed or compelled.

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It is always the trinity of suffering, struggle and revelation, that raises religion from an observance or tradition to a living force. That force alone provides both guidance and the spiritual resources for following it. If Churchianity were able to achieve this, there would be today no 'wholesale rejection of revelation and religious faith', no fear of atomic bombs, and no need for distinguishing between religion and faith.

Both the sincere churchman and the man who has found his faith outside any particular Church will agree that faith should permeate the whole of life and not be kept in store for special occasions. It does not follow, however, that faith is a sort of general maid-servant who has to attend to every job about the house, or that, in Eastern fashion, it can serve as an excuse for indifference, inertia, and blind fatalism. Whatever our beliefs, we all possess certain mental and physical faculties of which we are meant to make the fullest use. Faith will neither write our letters nor do our shopping for us; when we have to make an omelette it will prove simpler to break an egg than to start meditating, and when our child suffers from pneumonia, to summon a doctor rather than to rush to a prayer meeting.

The doctrine of certain fashionable revivalist movements whose members seek 'divine guidance' on such matters as to whether to use a taxi or a bus, or how much to tip a waitress, is foolish and degrading. For most of our daily duties reason, experience and the sense of discrimination born of them provide all the resources we need. Only when we are faced with difficulties that either defy those resources or have more serious moral implications are we entitled to seek assistance in faith.<sup>1</sup>

Such difficulties are all too common in human relations. For these are at the mercy of every emotional wind that blows, and every idiosyncrasy, or they lead to impasses from which reason alone cannot extricate us. A person we love dearly may sud-

<sup>1</sup> This not being a book on religion, I am obviously referring to faith merely from the aspect of human relations, and am disregarding its mystical core which is communion with, and glorification of, God for its own sake.

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denly be attacked by an incurable disease, or may commit a crime, or may transfer his or her affection to someone else; or, again, we may be tied irrevocably to a more than uncongenial parent, relative, business partner, or employer, from whom, for some reason or other, we are not in a position to free ourselves. By ordinary means we can do nothing to redeem situations such as these. We can only fall back on our faith, trusting that God may help us. Such dependence on God does not imply spineless inaction and fatalism. But while we actively continue our efforts towards bettering the position, we also look to a power whose range we know to exceed our own puny scope.

Out of the night that covers me,  
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be  
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance,  
I have not winced nor cried aloud,  
Under the bludgeonings of chance  
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

If we have faith, we will even hope that God may perform a miracle. For the miracle is not excluded from the kingdom of faith. (See p. 360.)

. . . . .

Yet however profound our faith, if we are wise we will admit that there exist certain situations which even faith cannot 'solve', and which we have to accept as inevitable. When faced by them, all we can do is say, 'Thy will be done'. Though we have free will, we are also hemmed in by an inescapable, individual fate. This coexistence of fate and free will baffles most people. They find no difficulty in admitting the latter, but refuse to admit the former. Yet no amount of free will can unmake the predestined boundaries set by the age, race, country, social environment, and family into which we were born, and by the gifts and weaknesses of mind and body, and the mental and physical features with which we have been fitted out. It



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hardly seems likely that, while most of what makes of us individuals should have been predestined, this hemming-in should come to a stop at the moment when our lives begin. We may alter and improve this or that given condition, and step out of the particular national or social circle into which we were born, but we cannot alter any of the fundamental features of our make-up, nor the consequences to which these inevitably lead. However free and powerful we may be, we can as little escape from our particular daimon, fate, karma, or the pattern in which our life unfolds itself, as we can jump over our shadow. The 'fell clutch of circumstance' is a universal reality, and the master of his fate is not so much the shaper of his own destiny, as the man who realizes that his faith will empower him to rise superior to circumstances, provided that he accepts his boundaries. Almost every school of psychology devotes much of its preliminary study to a comparison of the effects of heredity and environment, the existence and potency of these two factors being taken for granted. And so, if we are wise, we try to learn through experience where our boundaries lie and, thus, where it would be useless to continue to fight beyond them. We will know that if we refuse to accept them, even our faith will not help us. Once having imposed these boundaries, God's purpose cannot include unmaking them. For it is impossible to imagine an all-just and all-wise God ever transgressing against His own law.

Though faith is not a universal medicine that cures everything from corns to cancer, it nevertheless *does* provide a therapy of surpassing power and efficacy—provided that we know when and how to apply it, and that we do not expect from it the impossible. In the impossible we must even include transgression against the limits of the miracle.<sup>1</sup>

Falling back on his faith and throwing himself at God's mercy in a situation that defies his own resources, a man simply says: 'I know that I am neither sufficiently strong nor wise to

<sup>1</sup> It may be asked whether it makes sense to differentiate between a 'possible' and 'impossible' miracle. If something is a miracle, everything must be possible to it. In reality it is not so. When doctors have pronounced me to be suffering from an incurable disease, and

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cope with the problem that faces me now. But I also know that there exist powers greater than my own. By whatever name others may call those powers, I call them God. I believe that God is concerned with, and has at heart my wellbeing, and that He is always ready to come to my assistance. But I am fully aware that He will help me only after I have exhausted all my normal resources, and explicitly asked Him to do so. For not until a wish has become articulate through the medium of the word can it become creative. I also realise that asking for God's assistance is not enough, and that I first must establish conditions that would enable Him to do his work. Since it was He who provided me with a free will and decreed that such will is the core of my God-inherited divinity with which no one has the right to interfere—not even He—I must first silence its voice completely. Only then can God do His work through me. The power that has enabled me to effect the requisite renunciation is my faith. The different means that bring it about are prayer, detachment, silent communion with God, and again prayer.

‘God may either communicate His answer direct to me—which is revelation—or grant me additional powers to cope with whatever my particular difficulty may be. Or, again, He may alter the unfavourable circumstances that have brought my difficulties about.’

The sceptic will undoubtedly ask: ‘And what if after all these efforts God does *not* respond?’ ‘Well,’ the believer replies, ‘for one thing, I have lost nothing. Since I had already exhausted all my other resources, the effort made at the bidding of faith has in no way diminished them. So, in so far as these are concerned, I am not the poorer. In fact I may even be the richer. For, irrespective of whether God has responded or not, my effort has given me new strength and hope. Having enabled me to view my problem in a more detached spirit, it has helped

---

yet I recover; when I have lost the affection of a person, and then that affection is unexpectedly restored—I can speak of ‘possible’ miracles. To induce water to run uphill, to make a cabbage seed produce a banana tree, or to turn me into Julius Caesar—these are ‘impossible’ miracles.

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to restore my sense of perspective. Thus it has put me psychologically into a better condition.

‘From whatever angle I judge my faith-inspired effort, I come to the conclusion that it was a gain.’

. . . . .

But the effects of complete self-surrender to God are more than merely psychological. For in spite of what the sceptic—a man with no first-hand experience of such self-surrender—may say, God *does* respond. His response may not be instantaneous; or it may take a different form from the anticipated one, but unmistakably it comes.

Whenever it appears to us that God has ‘let us down’, the blame is not His but ours. Our approach to Him may not have been whole-hearted enough; or, in spite of our resolve, we may have tried to interfere with His will and follow the counsels of our own desires; or we had not freed ourselves completely from certain inner reservations and had tried to strike a bargain between His verdict and our own; or we were not absolutely truthful when we put our problem before Him; or we promised Him to act in a certain way, but as soon as our external conditions improved went back on our word. There exist innumerable ways in which we can attempt to deceive God, and each one of them is due to our human imperfection. And as God is not similarly limited, there is not a single way in which He can deceive us.

. . . . .

Man’s faith and his relations with his fellow-men represent what is most private and most intimate in his life. The believer—whether he has come by his faith through church-teaching or through an exclusively individual method—will, in regard to those relations, be at an advantage when compared with the non-believer. Provided he does not treat his faith as an abstract doctrine, but integrates it into his conduct, he has at his disposal means far surpassing in power and efficacy those that purely human agencies can provide.

Even if faith were based on nothing but an illusion, the

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believer would still score over the non-believer. Some of mankind's greatest achievements are inspired by so-called illusions: the illusions of man's inherent nobility, and of the inevitability of human progress; the illusion out of which a Shakespeare or a Raphael create the supremely convincing realities of their vision; the illusion of the divine rights of kings or of similar rights of the 'people'; the illusions of scientific hypotheses on which science bases so many of its discoveries; the illusion of the Indies that made Columbus discover America. Mankind has been arguing out the validity of its pet illusions for thousands of years; yet has never been able to deprive them of their fertilizing propensities, nor to prevent them from proving their creativeness by transforming themselves into reality. The only condition that those illusions must fulfil in order to achieve this end is that they should respond to some deep-seated urge in the human soul, and be a powerful inspiration to it. No other 'illusion' does this to the same extent as that of the existence of God.

For many centuries some of the best brains in history have laboured in vain to prove that the existence of God is an illusion. I repeat, in vain. And equally strenuous and sincere efforts, equally vain, have been made to define Him. But do the efforts of either of those classes matter? God cannot be explained by an intellectual formula or captured in the scientist's laboratory. He can only reveal Himself. And He reveals Himself either in His works or in the spirit of men—of men, that is to say, who are ready to hear His still voice. The conception of His nature formed by such men may be erroneous; but their works alone, conceived as they are in faith, confirm His existence more emphatically than the loudest choruses of the sceptics who aim at proving that He is *only* an illusion. Are not all the greatest things beyond proof, nay beyond knowledge itself: love, beauty, genius, time, infinity, the essence of creation? Perhaps they are all illusions though not precisely in the sceptics' use of the term. But if they are, then the entire universe is born of an illusion, and man himself is a dream dreamt by an illusion.

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